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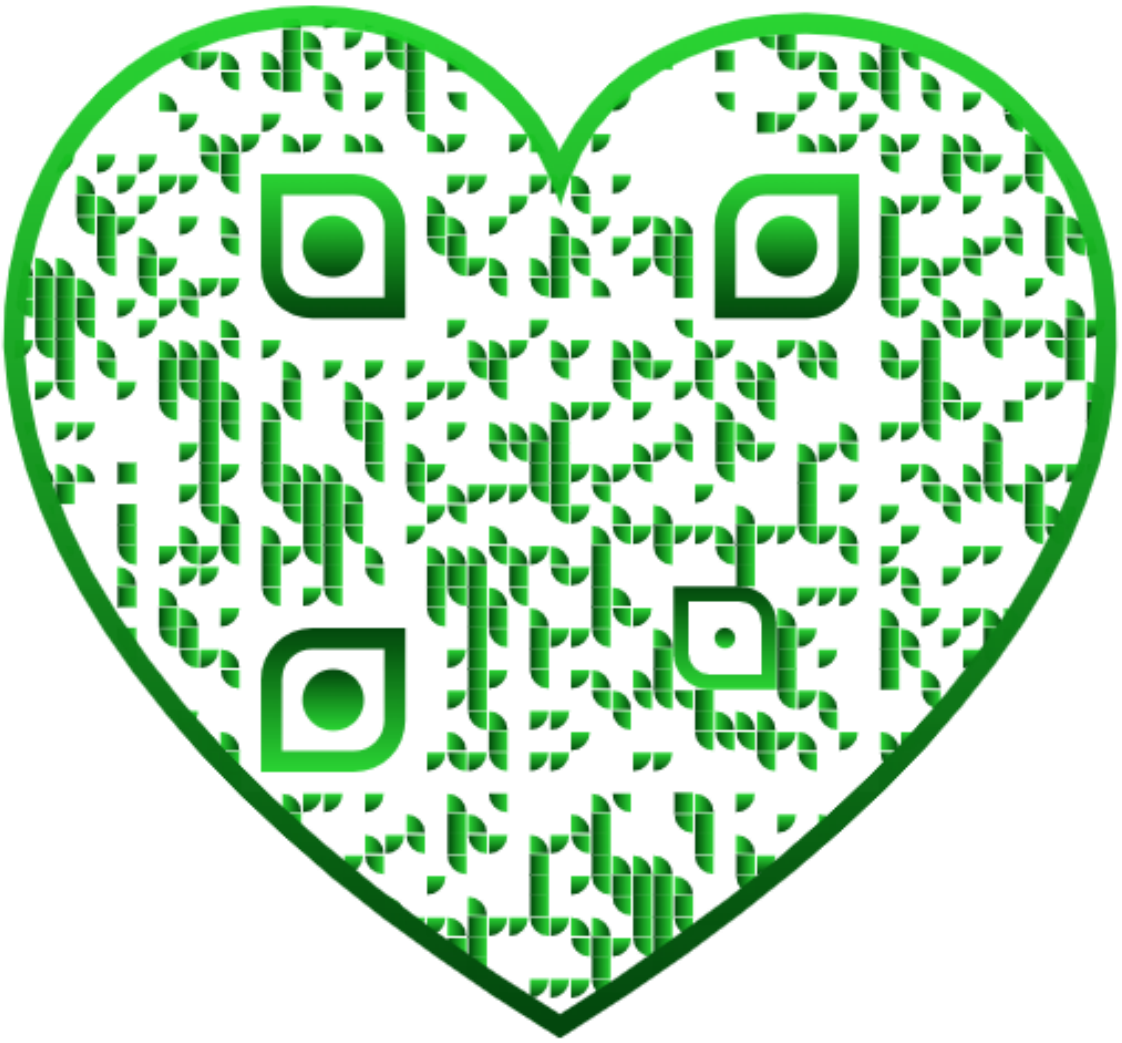

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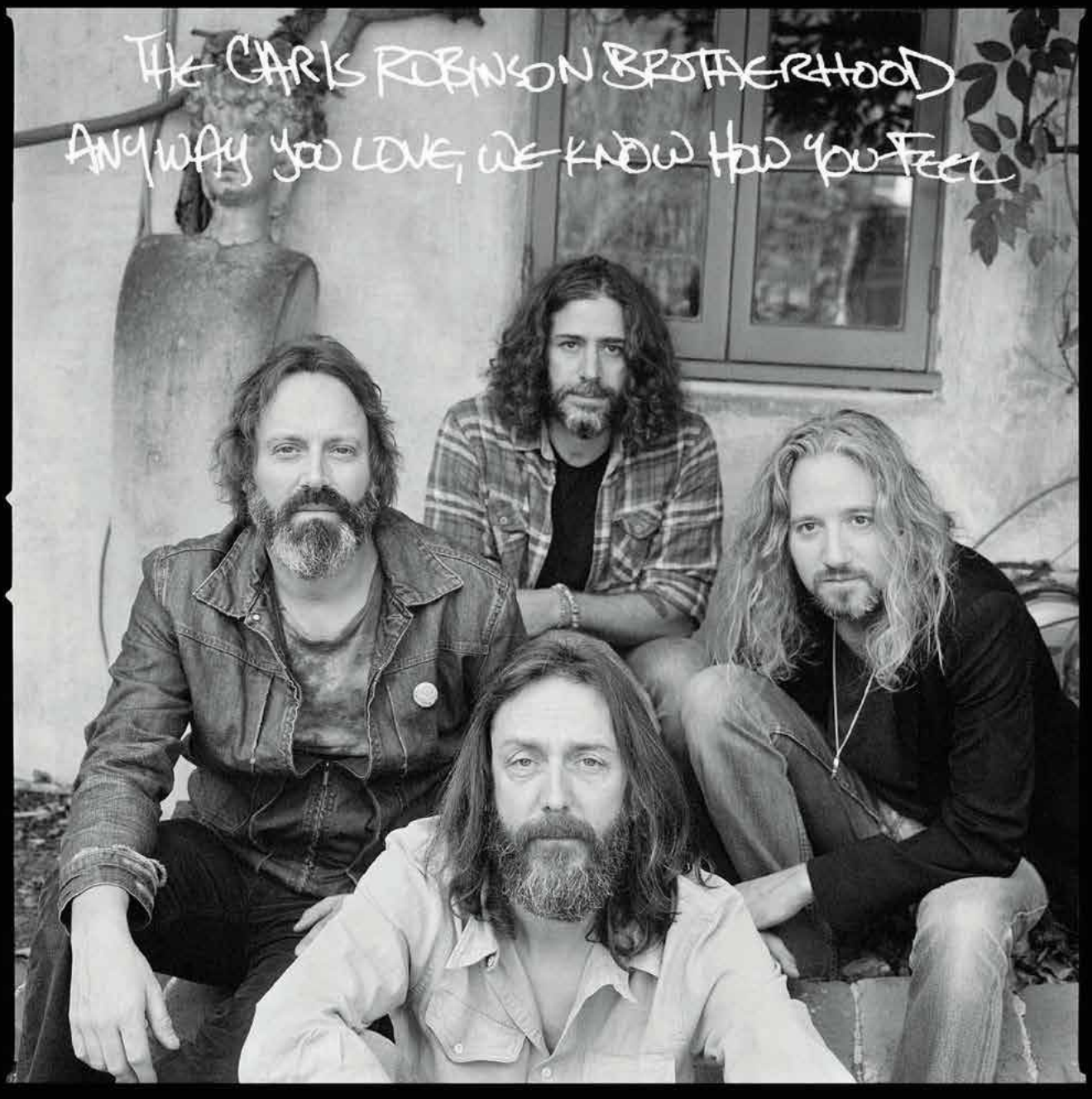

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Editor's Note

JULY_AUGUST 2016

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V43 NO5

I THINK JIM JAMES SAID IT BEST.

When discussing some of the pushback that Ray LaMontagne received after completing *Ouroboros*—his absorbing new album comprising two seamless, segued suites and no iTunes-ready singles—James observed, "*Dark Side of the Moon* and *What's Going On* are not only artistically successful, they're two of the most commercially successful records of all time. You would think that major labels would see this and say, 'Hey, there's a way we can have both. We can let the artist be creative. We can let the artist make this wild, cool, giant piece of music, but it also can be hugely commercially successful.'"

This, to me, is precisely the point. In the ongoing dichotomy of art and commerce that musicians often face, which seems all the more stark in 2016, there can yet be a vibrant nexus of artistic achievement.

From a label's perspective, our current era must feel like a throwback to the age of singles in the 1950s and early '60s. On the other hand, as I wrote in this issue's cover story, "a record like *Ouroboros* is not only the antithesis, it may also be the antidote to this sort of thinking, as there are plenty of consumers who are looking for something more substantive and ambitious that will reverberate."

I suspect that *Relix* readers will back me on this one.

Some of what inspired LaMontagne to conceive *Ouroboros* is a reminder of his halcyon days and the ritual of collectively savoring albums with friends. He still celebrates "that whole experience of listening to the first side, then when you get to the end, everyone takes a breath and there's a moment where you get another drink or you roll a joint and then everyone is like, 'OK, are we ready? We're going back in.' It's just a big communal experience."

LaMontagne cites *Dark Side* and *Blonde on Blonde* in this context, and, as for *Ouroboros* itself, he points to Talk Talk's *Spirit of Eden* and *Laughing Stock* as inspirations.

What was it for you? *Wish You Were Here*? *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*? For me, it was Todd Rundgren's *Todd*. We'd lie down on the shag rag, turn out the lights, cue up side one and the game was afoot. My association with that album is so strong that, many years later, when it finally came out on CD, I held off on playing it for a few weeks, saving it for an imminent late-night car ride. On that evening, I dropped it into my player but immediately had to turn it off for fear of driving off the road.

Years later, it was Miles Davis' *A Tribute to Jack Johnson*, with *In a Silent Way* a close second. I once lugged some "portable" speakers up the side of a mountain for a few hours (back when they weren't quite as portable as today) so that when I finally reached the summit I could reward myself with *Jack Johnson*, an experience so satisfying and memorable that I've never repeated it. As I type this, I can still feel the exaltation I experienced with John McLaughlin's first notes. (What album did this for you? Send an email to dean@relix.com and share your memory. We'll aim to run some of those responses in a future issue of the magazine.)

Of course, you've also likely experienced any number of concert recordings in a similar context. When it comes to official releases, the majesty that is *Live/Dead* may have set you down the path. Or perhaps it was Phish's *A Live One*, the Allman Brothers Band's *At Fillmore East*, Coltrane's *"Live" at the Village Vanguard* or maybe B.B. King's *Live at the Regal*. Any of these could have been the gateway to your own archival collection of astounding shows. The fabled second set from the Grateful Dead at Barton Hall on 5/8/77 will do in a pinch, and I always keep it at the ready, along with a few Sonny Rollins sets and the standalone "Runaway Jim" from 11/29/97, which clocks in at nearly an hour.

In this context, though, I'm thinking of those artists who put in the time and effort to create studio albums that defy convention and offer the listener much more than an aggregation of singles.

After speaking with LaMontagne for our cover story, I believe he never felt he was "taking a chance" when he wrote the material on *Ouroboros*. Instead, he would have desecrated his inner compass had he inhibited the path to free expression. Like anyone who shares his voice with the world, LaMontagne had faith that other people would learn of the album and seek it out, even without the catalyst of a single, so that *Ouroboros* might become the soundtrack for their communal shag carpets, microfiber couches or mountaintops.

I'd like to prove him right and do the same for other artists who trust in their inner voice.

For, indeed, as Ray LaMontagne sings in the final line of the album, "You're never going to hear this song on the radio, but wouldn't it make a lovely photograph?"

I encourage you to share in that vision.

DEAN BUDNICK
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Publisher Peter Shapiro

Editors-in-Chief
Dean Budnick and Mike Greenhaus

Associate Editor Rob Slater

Copy Editor Amy Jacques

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Tim Donnelly, Jesse Jarnow, Richard B. Simon, Jeff Tamarkin

Art Direction & Design
Paperplane

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Deb Schuler/Red Herring Design

Contributing Writers
John Adamian, Michael Berick, Glenn BurnSilver, Chris Diestler, Jim Farber, John Patrick Gatta, Richard Gehr, Dylan Gray, Kiran Herbert, Justin Jacobs, Craig Minowa, Rob Mitchum, Bill Murphy, Matt Nestor, Wes Orshoski, Alan Paul, J. Poet, Ryan Reed, Carter Shelter, David Steinberg, Larson Sutton, Mike Thomas, Bradley Tucker, Jason Woodbury, Emily Zemler, Lee Zimmerman, Wayan Zoey

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Relix Main Office
104 W. 29th St, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Advertising Sales: (011) + 1-646-674-1745
Fax: (011) + 1-646-230-0200
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ON THE COVER

Brian Stowell shot Ray LaMontagne and My Morning Jacket.

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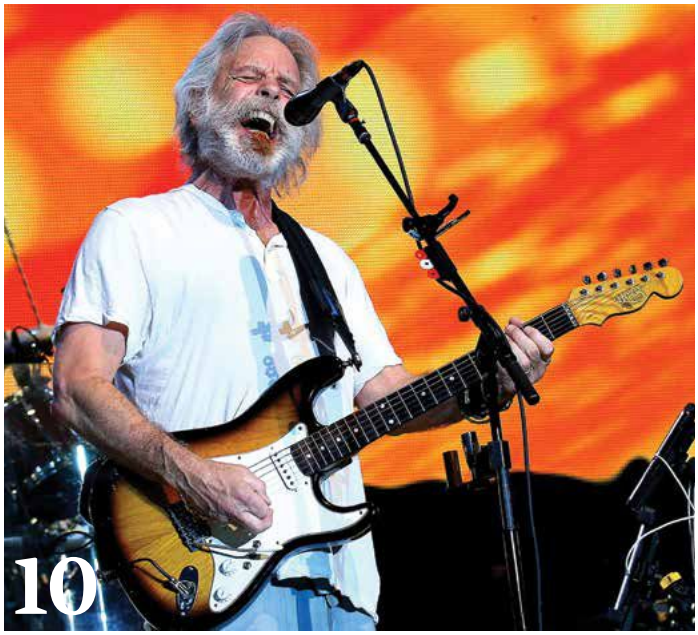

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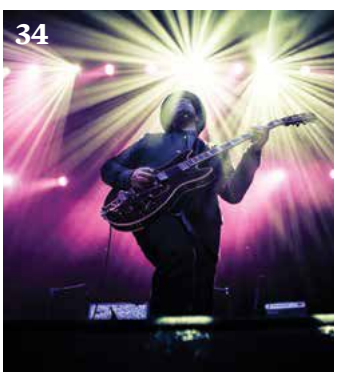

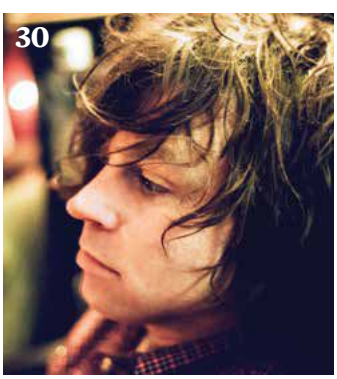

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FEATURES

54 Circular Progression

Ray LaMontagne's latest album and tour are full-on collaborations with **My Morning Jacket**. After working with The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach on 2014's *Supernova*, LaMontagne enlisted MMJ frontman **Jim James** to produce his absorbing, atmospheric new record, *Ouroboros*, which features two musical suites, a throwback to LaMontagne's formative experiences listening to the two sides of LPs. While James won't accompany LaMontagne on the road this summer, the other members of My Morning Jacket will serve as LaMontagne's backing band and help him explore the new material. Editor-in-Chief **Dean Budnick** examines how the project came to fruition and what the future holds for these compelling musicians.

48 I and Love and New York

Playing Madison Square Garden isn't a small feat for any band, but it's particularly impressive when a string-based outfit from North Carolina rises through the New York City club ranks to headline "The World's Most Famous Arena." And that's exactly what **The Avett Brothers** did this past April when they rolled through MSG shortly before the release of their ninth studio album, the Rick Rubin-produced, remix-inspired *True Sadness*. Editor-in-Chief **Mike Greenhaus** spent time with the group backstage before their recent marquee gig and explores how one of the biggest touring acts in the festival world can still turn in a deeply personal pop record that is filled with both truth and sadness.

45 Goodbye. Amen. Hello.

Yeasayer burst out of the hipster underground ahead of the current psychedelic-rock boom, warping their indie-rock hooks with trippy effects and Bollywood beats long before the DIY underground rediscovered Alice's looking glass. But after releasing a particularly dark third album in 2012, the Brooklyn-based trio remained uncharacteristically quiet. Though their new record is curiously titled *Amen & Goodbye*, as **Ryan Reed** finds, after a four-year break, Yeasayer are now ready to reclaim their place as art-rock hit-makers with a fresh sound that's equal parts Can and Curious George.

42 The New Golden Age of Guitar

The guitar has had a tough decade or so. Though classic guitar-rock has remained a warm American staple, like baseball or FM radio, in recent years, laptop-toting DJs and beat-makers have dominated both festival stages and the pop charts with increased regularity. However, while few were paying attention, a new generation of alternative guitar gods like **Steve Gunn**, **William Tyler** and **Chris Forsyth** have started their own beautifully hushed revolution. Contributing Editor **Jesse Jarnow** offers a primer on 21st-century American Primitive.

38 The Good Governor

It's the summer of political discontent, yet one voice of his generation knows the difference between being politically active and being a political aspirant. **Ziggy Marley**, the eldest son of reggae lion Bob Marley, is more content working in his garden or catching a movie than jumping on the campaign trail but, as he explains to **Larson Sutton**, he's also well aware of the weight that his name holds. So it isn't surprising that this onetime Melody Maker stacks his new, self-titled album with the type of progressive ideas and strongly held beliefs that still make us feel like "everything's gonna be alright."

34 Feeling It

Eric Krasno isn't a stranger to these pages. A staple of the jamband scene since the late '90s, he's helped steer both Soulive and Lettuce to international success while blossoming into an in-demand producer on both sides of the hip-hop and groove-rock aisle. More than two decades after he laid the groundwork for his singular career during a high-school program at Berklee College of Music, Krasno is stepping out with a solo album and—to everyone's surprise—exploring his newfound singing abilities. **Alan Paul** lets us know what to expect.

32 Back in the Driver's Seat

Kung Fu started as a second marriage—the union of some of the New England jam scene's best kept secrets in a new project with their own voice and vision. Settling on a distinctive brand of groovy fusion that felt both fresh and familiar, the Connecticut-based group found immediate success, but their future felt uncertain after they parted ways with keyboardist **Todd Stoops** last year. Assistant Editor **Matt Inman** caught up with the band shortly before the release of their new album *Joyride* and shows how this funky quintet rebounded with their best record yet.

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Dear Relix

Here's what readers are talking about online and offline

DEAR RELIX

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Send your thoughts to letters@relix.com.

ZAPPA BATTLES ZAPPA

Brothers Dweezil and Ahmet Zappa exchanged open letters in the media after Dweezil claimed that he was forced to change Zappa Plays Zappa's name due to ownership rights. As the ugly war of words waged on in the press, our readers weighed in.

It seems unfortunate but true that Gail Zappa's ugly legacy of greed lives on through her children. And, as under her regime, their father's legacy will continue to be tarnished, and the spread of his music into the historical breadth it so richly deserves will continue to be held back. Frank must be spinning in his grave.

RHOmea via Relix.com

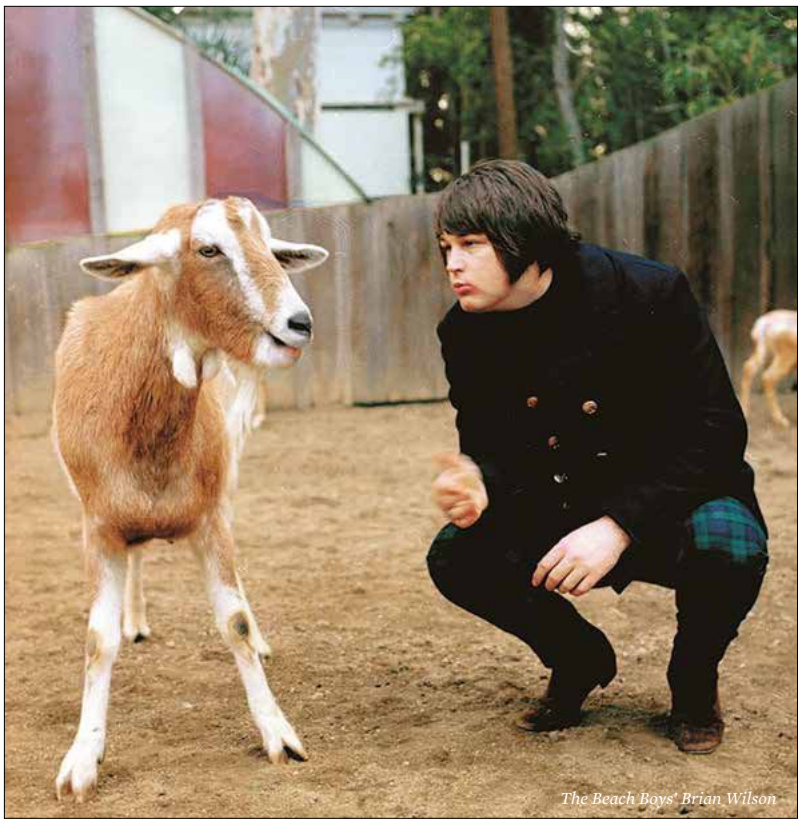
ALAN LIGHT REMEMBERS PRINCE

I read *Let's Go Crazy* ("In Memoriam: Prince," June 2016) about a year ago, and it vividly brought me back to the start of my teenage Prince obsession and the feeling and texture of those years in the mid-'80s. From freshman year to the summer after graduation, we went from *1999* to *Sign O' the Times*. What a gift from Prince and what a beautiful book recalling that tender time. Thank you, sir.

Scott via Relix.com

Nice article. I would like to hear more about Prince's music and process, what it revealed about the human being. While the death of Prince is hurtful, I hope his dying does not define his living. He spent a whole 57 years living—that is the point. What a gift, what an inspiration. His drive and talent should be a defining benchmark to be emulated, not the exception.

Joan via Relix.com



The Beach Boys' Brian Wilson

PET SOUNDS' FINAL FLIGHT

In an exclusive interview for Jambands.com, Howie Edelson spoke with Brian Wilson on the eve of his current tour. The Beach Boys visionary is performing *Pet Sounds* in its entirety for the final time in celebration of the classic album's 50th anniversary. When asked to clarify the rumor that he didn't want the classic song "Sloop John B" on *Pet Sounds*, Wilson responded: "I wanted it to be a single, but when they said 'album,' I said fine. That was OK with me. I said it would help the album." He also highlighted "God Only Knows" as his favorite original song and described the process of writing his upcoming biography as being "like therapy—it was like reliving some of my life." Elsewhere, he touched on the completion of The Beach Boys' famed lost album *Smile*, which Wilson finally finished just over a decade ago, saying, "It changed my personal life a lot 'cause it gave me confidence that I could create an album that beautiful. It gave me some confidence."

RECORD STORE PROFILE: GRIMEY'S, NASHVILLE, TENN.

As far as independent record stores are concerned, Grimey's may rank as one of the finest. Located in the fertile sonic grounds of Music City, Grimey's has played host to in-store performances by The Black Keys and The Avett Brothers, as well as special shows from Metallica, Band of Horses and others in their 150-capacity basement. Of course, the store is also home to endless rows of record bins curated by a friendly, knowledgeable staff.

INSTAPRINT

Dave Matthews Band threw it back to the H.O.R.D.E. days during their recent stop in Atlanta when they welcomed Widespread Panic/Aquarium Rescue Unit guitarist Jimmy Herring for a few tunes. Herring performed electric guitar alongside Tim Reynolds, adding to the *Busted Stuff* cut "Raven," as well as their classic hit "Satellite" and the rarity "Sugar Will." Here, saxophonist Jeff Coffin (@jeffcoffin) snaps a photo of Herring and Matthews rehearsing backstage before the show.

Somewhere Between Space and Spirituality

Cloud Cult's frontman finds the middle ground between physicists and mystics. BY CRAIG MINOWA

I'VE ALWAYS FOUND the songwriting process to be a great way to look into the big questions in life: Why are we here? Where do we go? What's the purpose? Our newest album, *The Seeker*, is no exception to the rule. It is probably the most forthright of our 10-album discography in regards to being transparent about the fact that I, like so many others out there, can't stop searching—and music is a great art form to explore the mysteries of life and search for the mystical.

In fact, for the vast majority of our time as a species on this planet, music has predominantly been used as a ritualistic tool to connect with the divine. Face paint on and circling the fire, our ancestors used music, night after night, as a direct channel of communication to the "spirit world." Music works so effectively for these purposes because the listener and performer can get so engulfed in the poetry of sound that it's possible to lose your sense of self and thereby more easily connect to things outside of everyday thought patterns.

It's important to note that there's a big difference between "spiritual" music and "religious" music. Both can serve similar purposes, but some of the best "spiritual" music doesn't wear any labels and doesn't force listeners into any specific religion. In fact, when it comes to our understanding of our place in this universe, there's an amazing amount of common ground between the world's religions, the ancient mystics and modern-day science, and we need to celebrate that more often.

Music can be a great tool for diverse communities to come together and spiritually celebrate without hammering heads over religious differences. For me, when it comes time for the music composition process

and lyric writing, I often surround myself with the writings of the mystics and the physicists and look for similarities in their answers to the big questions. For example, let's take a look at that age-old question of "Where does the universe end and begin?" Einstein showed us that space is curved. The universe is not flat but is an expanding sphere, like a balloon. So whenever you look out into space or travel any distance, you are moving around the outer curve of that "balloon." Combine that fact with a second concept, which is that at the level of quantum mechanics time does not exist. So when we look out into space, the light from the stars we are seeing appears to have taken thousands of years to get here, but for the energy in that light, it took no time at all.

The physicist and the mystic agree on this perspective.

From the Buddhists and Taoists, we have the Zen Proverb:

"The infinite is in the finite of every instant."

From the Christians, we read in 2 Peter 3:8:

"With God, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

From the scientists, we read from Albert Einstein:

"People who understand physics know that the distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."

Couple timelessness with the aforementioned curvature of space and we come up with something amazing: If you had a strong enough telescope to look far enough out into space until you could see the "end" of the universe (and you didn't have to wait for the time it takes light to travel), you would literally see the back of your head. This isn't whimsical philosophy—this is straight-up science. In that same sense, if you headed out on a journey to travel to the very farthest end of the universe from where you are currently standing, at the "end" of the universe you'd find yourself in exactly the same place as you are in this moment—right here, right now. From your perspective, you, in this place and moment, are the beginning and the ending of the universe.

That says a little bit about where we are in the universe, but what are we? We have 2,500-year-old writings from ancient Eastern mystics saying we're just massive amounts of energy manifested into an illusion of physical form. That may sound like a lot of fluff, but Einstein's theory of relativity shows us that all physical matter in the universe (stars, socks, ice cream, bones, etc.) is made of condensed energy. In fact, if you took the average person's mass and converted your physical body back into pure energy, it would be the rough equivalent of 7x10 to the 18th power joules of energy. That means that you, in this place and moment, quite literally have the power of 30 hydrogen bombs inside of you.

Yikes, what are we supposed to do with that kind of power? Again, the physicist and mystic share common ground, as we see nearly all of the ancient mystical writings and main world religions focus on a life of good intention. The first law of thermodynamics, the fundamental law on which all of physics is built upon, says that energy cannot be created or destroyed—it can only be transformed. Everything we think, feel and do has an energy that continues to resonate out into the universe. That little negative thought I had this morning—it will literally never go away. *Ugh*. But, that little positive moment I had with my son last night—it will also never go away. Those energy patterns move off into the universe and join the waves of eternity. And since the only thing that can transform energy is energy, all of those positive things that we do can have an infinite domino effect. We have the powerful choice in any given moment to take the energy of the present and transform it into something positive, negative or just let it pass through.

And that seems like a dang good thing to sing about.

Craig Minowa formed Cloud Cult in 1995. The Minnesota-based group released their latest album, The Seeker, *in February with the help of PledgeMusic.*

The Beat

THE BEST FROM FESTS & TOURS TODAY

LCD Soundsystem

BONNAROO MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL

MANCHESTER, TENN.

JUNE 9-12

BY DEAN BUDNICK// PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEAN BUDNICK, JOHN PATRICK GATTA AND ALEC GOWAN

The Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival celebrated its 15th birthday over four days in mid-June. This year's headliners—**LCD Soundsystem**, **Pearl Jam** and **Dead & Company**—reflected the current scope and diversity of the event, which has long since evolved beyond its jamband roots, yet still reflects its origins. Throughout the weekend, the festival's collaborative spirit was represented by Paramore singer **Hayley Williams**' cameo with **CHVRCHES**, **Chance the Rapper**'s surprise sit-ins with **J. Cole**, **Macklemore & Ryan Lewis**, **Bryson Tiller** and **Miguel**, **Kamasi Washington**'s cross-generational jam with his father, and Halsey's guest spot with **The Chainsmokers** during their late-night set.

While, as per tradition, the two main stages (What and Which) remained dark on Thursday, the event kicked off with a variety of tent performers like **Roman GianArthur**, who bookended his show with covers of Prince's "Let's Go Crazy" and "Purple Rain." Other Thursday standouts, who drew on a range of styles and influences while vying for potential What Stage consideration down the road, included: **Con Brio**, **The London Souls**, **Papadosio**, **Waxahatchee**, **Bully**, **Marian Hill**, **Joseph** and **The Floozies**. An animated **Vulfpeck** may have drawn the largest and most enthusiastic crowd of the night with their energetic spectacle, during which they welcomed fellow Michigan performer **BØRNS** to the stage for "Back Pocket."

An early Friday highlight was a timeless, soulful performance by **Andra Day**, who officially opened the Which Stage. The day also featured notable sets by the female vocalists fronting **MisterWives**, CHVRCHES, **Lucius** and **Halsey**. Additional audience ardor crested during music from **Rayland Baxter**, **Jarryd James**, **FIDLAR**, **Leon Bridges** and **M83**, as well as a late-night performance by **Tame Impala**.

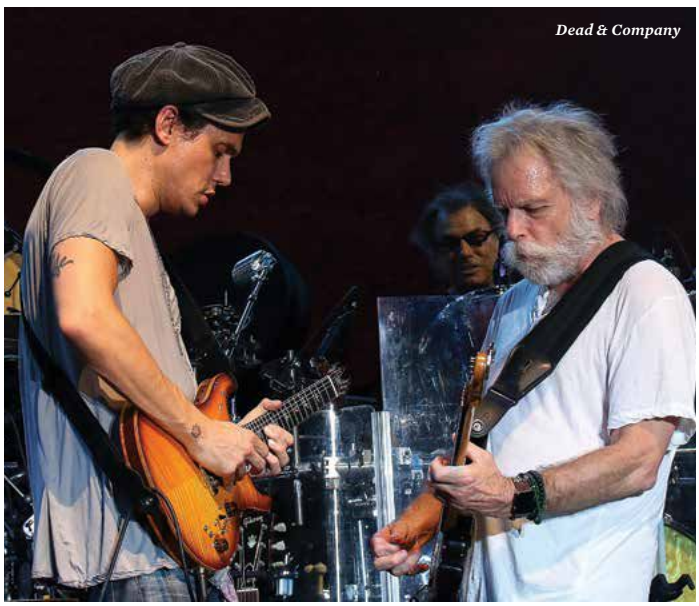
The reunited LCD Soundsystem—returning to Bonnaroo for the first time since 2010—kept a responsive crowd moving with songs such as "Us v Them," "Daft Punk Is Playing at My House," "Dance Yrself Clean" and "All My Friends."

Saturday opened with the simultaneous sounds of **Grace Potter**, **Chicano Batman**, **Whilk and Misky**, **Anderson East** and late addition **Jason Mraz** (returning for the first time since 2003). Momentum then built over the course of the day, through music from **Natalie Prass**, **Steve Gunn**, **Chris Stapleton**, **Band of Horses** and a

Alec Gowan

Pearl Jam

M83


Dead & Company

Grace Potter

special tribute to the late Garry Shandling by **Judd Apatow** and guest **Eddie Vedder** in the Comedy Theatre. However, midway through **Macklemore & Ryan Lewis**' set on the What Stage, an approaching, intense weather cell led festival organizers to instruct fans to leave the grounds for a 90-minute cooldown. Pearl Jam's Vedder later saluted the crowd for their patience and perseverance during a 22-song set that drew on favorites such as "Go," "Corduroy," "Alive" and Neil Young's "Rockin' in the Free World." The band invited longtime producer **Brendan O'Brien** to play keys on "Black" and dedicated a cover of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" to Dead & Company's **Mickey Hart**. A tender moment also took place as Vedder brought out his daughter **Olivia** to celebrate her 12th birthday and had the crowd hold up their cell phones as candles on a cake for her to blow out.

In a fitting nod to Bonnaroo's anniversary year, the signature SuperJam explored the work of Tennessee-bred musicians and songwriters, and featured a core band led by Kamasi Washington, supported by guitarist **Eric Krasno**, some of Kraz's **Lettuce** bandmates and a rotating cast of players. Guests included Miguel ("SexyBack"), **GIVERS**' **Tiffany Lamson** ("I Never Loved a Man"), members of **Third Eye Blind** ("Ring of Fire"), **Nathaniel Rateliff** ("Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City"), **GRiZ** ("Morning"), **Oh Wonder** ("Jolene") and **Chicano Batman** ("Theme From Shaft").

Recently reunited British funk pioneers **Cymande** made their Bonnaroo debut early Sunday afternoon on the Which Stage, helping kick off a day that saw temperatures rise into the mid-'90s while acts such as **Ween**, **Father John Misty**, **Death Cab for Cutie** and **Charles Bradley & His Extraordinaires** seemed to dig in and draw inspiration from the heat. **Ed Helms**' fourth annual Bluegrass Situation SuperJam featured **Sara** and **Sean Watkins**, **Sam Bush**, **Lee Ann Womack**, **Amanda Shires**, **Langhorne Slim** and **Steep Canyon Rangers** for the final performance of the festival prior to Dead & Co.

Bonnaroo revisited its origins with a Sunday night main stage performance by Dead & Company, who expanded to a septet for much of their two sets with guest vocalist **Donna Jean Godchaux**. Before the last notes of the festival, a "Touch of Grey" encore, **Bob Weir** addressed the crowd regarding the mass shooting in Orlando the previous night, excoriating both terrorists who advocate for violence and those who use the Bible to justify harm on the gay community, affirming the power of music to agitate, uplift and heal.

Clockwise from top left: Dean Budnick, Dean Budnick, Dean Budnick, John Patrick Gatta

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Soundcheck

LIVE REVIEWS AND NEWS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE *Compiled by* DEAN BUDNICK

Visiting **The Waterfall** *at Red Rocks*

Gerald Bivens

MY MORNING JACKET

RED ROCKS AMPHITHEATRE
MORRISON, COLO.
MAY 29

As **My Morning Jacket** took the stage for the second of two sold-out nights at the fabled Red Rocks Ampitheatre, it was clear they planned to match their sound to the epic setting.

Opening with "Compound Fracture" from their most recent album, *The Waterfall,* **Jim James** carried himself like a biblical figure in a revival of *Godspell*, sporting sunglasses and a Technicolor dreamcoat, sloshing his lion's mane in the breeze. His piercing yowl was probably heard in heaven itself.

For a band from Kentucky, they rarely sounded as Southern rock as they did on "The Dark," one of three songs the crowd was treated to from their 1999 debut, *The Tennessee Fire*. Another of the concert's early highlights was "Spring (Among the Living)" from *The Waterfall*, which received a particularly funky reading.

The setlist cut a wide swath through the group's catalog, from sizzling rhythm and blues to unearthly guitar shredding. Even the strategically placed "slow and pretty" numbers (like 2001's "Bermuda Highway") came off as more majestic than the album recording.

James employed his famous falsetto for all it was worth on *At Dawn*'s "The Way That He Sings." They let the ending chords ring out like it was a holy revival meeting, and followed with the first real surprise of the night: a crowd-pleasing Prince cover; "Take Me With U" finally became the rock anthem it always deserved to be.

The band bounced effortlessly between gloomy and bright all night, but at the end of "A New Life," from James' 2013 solo album, guitarist **Carl Broemel** busted out the saxophone, and the next few songs took on a 1950s-esque rave-up quality, à la The E Street Band.

The set closed with the hard-hitting punch of "Tropics (Erase Traces)," a rather protracted "Dondante," and the splendor that is 2005's "Gideon." The sounds of reverb then echoed through the Colorado night, from a guitar left resting against an amplifier.

A seven-song encore began with another surprise: the Eagles' "Peaceful Easy Feeling," which sounded perfectly at home in this setlist. James relinquished his post upstage and brought out original MMJ guitarist **Johnny Quaid**, then proceeded to stalk the front of the stage like a panther, slinking through classics like "Wordless Chorus" and "Phone Went West," before the biggest shock of the night, a cover of The Commodores' "Easy." With encouraging words from Panther Jim like, "We're all friends here," and "We're all together here," the crowd was coaxed into becoming a 9,500-voice chorus singing backup, and, for a moment, everything seemed innocent and blissful.

Like most great bands, My Morning Jacket's thunder can best be truly appreciated live. And experiencing it at Red Rocks was nothing short of monumental. ***Chris Diestler***

BOSTON CALLING MUSIC FESTIVAL

CITY HALL PLAZA
BOSTON
MAY 27-29

The seventh edition of Boston Calling marked the end of an era of sorts for the fledgling festival—the last time it will be staged in the brick-and-concrete confines of City Hall Plaza. Festival organizers have announced plans to move the festival to the expansive grassy fields of the Harvard Athletic Complex next year, but they made sure to send fans out with a bang in 2016, delivering one of the best editions of the fest to date. While dazzling headlining sets from **Sia**, **Robyn** and **Disclosure** may have had top billing, it was the acts a little lower on the lineup that truly stole the show.

On Friday night, **Sufjan Stevens** preceded Sia's music-meets-performance-art show with a tutorial in making sad songs fun, complete with DayGlo outfits, swan wings, balloon headdresses and a banjo being smashed to pieces one song into the set. None of that is to mention the way Sufjan and his band bring his songs to life and rework each and every one of them into beautiful masterpieces.

Those who combatted the brutal heat wave on Saturday were rewarded with standout sets from Boston DIY upstarts **Palehound**, hip-hop provocateur **Lizzo** and the laid-back reigning queen of indie rock, **Courtney Barnett**, who unleashed a wrecking ball of a set beneath the sweltering sun.

As temperatures cooled on Sunday, the festival continued to bubble with a kind of energy that other years of the fest sometimes lacked. That was thanks to an eclectic lineup that included Europop group **Christine & The Queens**, psych-pop-funk ensemble **Unknown Mortal Orchestra**, the man behind one of last year's best rap albums, **Vince Staples**, soul reviver **Charles Bradley** and indie-pop sister act **Haim**, the latter of whom truly had the crowd moving, shaking and singing along. But the weekend's best slot has to go to **Janelle Monáe**, who, in one of her few shows of the year, owned the Boston Calling stage like few in the festival's history. She was bolting back and forth, dancing her ass off, preaching about love and equality, paying tribute to her mentor Prince and just singing like only she can—with the crowd going back and forth between rock-star-level excitement and simply giving into the music and joining Monáe in dance.

Despite carping from some quarters about a shift toward a more pop-centric lineup, this year's offering was one of the festival's most diverse yet. More than half the acts playing Boston Calling's main stages were fronted by women, people of color or both—a feat that few other festivals, big or small, can claim. It felt like what a music festival of this size *should* feel like.

Though there are some who will miss the central location and accessibility, as well as the smaller crowds of City Hall Plaza, the new grounds should prove far more comfortable. More important, the move has the potential to significantly increase the size and scope of Boston Calling's musical lineup, taking it from small city festival to major national player, while giving its always-diverse lineups some room to breathe.

Carter Shelter

Janelle Monáe owns the stage at Boston Calling

Matthew Shelter, Jan Salzman

MYKAL ROSE

GASLAMP
LONG BEACH, CALIF.
MAY 21

Alongside its more recent reputation as a hotbed of hip-hop, Long Beach, Calif., has been a bastion of reggae music and culture for generations. In past years, the city has played host to an annual weekend celebrating Bob Marley's birthday, bringing the upper echelon of international stars to its convention center and famed arena. So, when **Mykal Rose** took his *Sidewalk Steppa* tour to Southern California, it made perfect sense that he skipped Los Angeles; instead, he headlined a full evening's slate farther south down the Pacific Coast Highway.

Closing a bill that featured over a half-dozen reggae artists, Rose carved his way through the Gaslamp crowd, enjoying buzzing applause, back pats and photo snaps prior to bounding onstage just before midnight. Stark and arresting in a black jacket, white pants, shirt and dread wrap, the once and future Black Uhuru frontman was rejuvenating, dancing to the opening pops of "What Is Life" and leading his locked-in, four-piece backing crew. To his left, daughter **Angelique** joined him on harmony as the legendary Grammy winner jammed and jogged his way through a setlist that covered over four decades of roots-reggae favorites.

Outside in the smoker's lounge—a patio that took full advantage of SoCal's lax attitude toward herbal imbibing—a few aging Rastas conversed and peddled wares like Bob Marley T-shirts and tri-color beanies.

Mykal Rose: Joyful and full of spirit

Inside, Rose competed somewhat with an abundance of TV screens hanging in virtually every corner of the expansive club, showing reggae videos without sound and ads for Sunday brunch and UFC night. Even with the unwanted distraction, all eyes and ears were on the master. Puffs of dry ice encircled him and his group as he guided a call-and-response, dusting off a disdain for Mondays on "Android Rebellion," before an incendiary "General Penitentiary."

Rose lit his lighter and asked for the crowd to do the same—a welcome reprieve from the incessant cell-phone cameras that infest most concerts, reminding everyone that the singer still knows how the old-school ways can work their magic. One song often melted into the next, with guitarist **Siahvash Dowlatshahi** providing nimble licks and subtle segues, sliding the Uhuru nugget "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" into the unabashed adoration of "I Love King Selassie." A brief homage to the Marley protest anthem "War"—drawn from Selassie's speech on race and revolution—tinted the tone away from the party, before returning with "Sinsemilla."

Mykal Rose represents enduring history with every appearance. Positive and magnetic, his voice still scales the high walls, still echoes in the chasms, uniting the saints and sinners. He is joyful and full of spirit, still riding the mystical island vibration he found over 40 years ago.

Larson Sutton

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TODD RUNDGREN

GREENWICH ODEUM
EAST GREENWICH, R.I.
MAY 20

The Greenwich Odeum is a small-town venue that reflects a growing movement toward reestablishing local cultural hubs. Originally built in 1926 during the waning days of vaudeville and the concurrent rise of motion-picture palaces, the 400-capacity theater located in downtown East Greenwich, R.I., screened first-run films for nearly seven decades until the construction of a nearby national multiplex ushered in its closure. Following a series of fits and starts, the Odeum re-opened in 2013 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization staffed entirely by volunteers, embracing a model now shared by numerous like-minded community revitalization projects.

The Odeum has hit its stride in recent months, bringing such artists as Leon Russell, Martin Sexton and Jorma Kaukonen to Main Street in East Greenwich. The latest enlightened booking arrived on a temperate mid-May Friday night as **Todd Rundgren** came to town with his quintet. For his current run of "Hot Toddies" dates, Rundgren is focusing on his best-known and most-beloved material, drawing from 50 potential songs for a given evening's setlist. As the father of two sons who have pursued baseball careers, Rundgren explained that he would throw no curve balls, opting instead to deliver material straight down the middle.

On what Rundgren joked was the first and only night of his Rhode Island tour, he opened with a run from "I Saw the Light" (from 1972's *Something/Anything?*), through "Love of the Common Man" (1976's *Faithful*) and "Open My Eyes" (the first song on Rundgren's 1968 debut with Nazz and later re-recorded for The New Cars project in 2006). He then greeted the audience, introduced the evening's mission statement and commented on the vagaries of New England weather, alluding apologetically to the high pollen count. While the throat irritant may have initially inhibited the high end of his range, by the time Rundgren reached "It Wouldn't Have Made Any Difference" in the fourth spot of the night, his voice was in fine fettle.

The band was well-equipped for a guided tour of his catalog. Bassist **Kasim Sulton** first joined him in Utopia in the late 1970s, while drummer **Prairie Prince**, guitarist **Jesse Gress** and keyboard player **John Ferenzik** have all been steady accompanists since the 1990s. The group held the stage for just over two hours and, as promised, the material spanned Rundgren's career from the Nazz era (they also performed "Kiddie Boy" from 1969's *Nazz Nazz*) through "Soothe," which appeared on 2015's *Global*.

Highlights included the pulsing "Drive," from 1982's *The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect* (paired with the album's sports-arena staple "Bang the Drum All Day"), as well as the understated "I Don't Want to Tie You Down," along with Utopia standouts "Hammer in My Heart," "Lysistrata," "One World" and the closing "Love in Action."

All told, the evening had a fitting, timeless quality to it, spanning nearly 50 years and supplying an ideal soundtrack for a pre-summer Main Street stroll.

Dean Budnick

Kasim Sulton and Todd Rundgren share "Hot Toddies" in East Greenwich

Dean Budnick

The King Gizzard Maelstrom

Billy Heemer

KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD

UNDERGROUND ARTS
PHILADELPHIA
MAY 15

Led by king madman **Stu MacKenzie**, the Australian psych-rock septet **King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard** took the stage two minutes after 11 p.m. for a set of angry, gut-punching, kaleidoscopic rock-and-roll. As they kicked into "Robot Stop," the opening track on the band's latest LP, *Nonagon Infinity*, MacKenzie exhorted the crowd to "Loosen up/ Time to jump/ Fuck shit up," and the audience obliged, whipping into a moshing frenzy that rarely relented over the course of the 80-minute set.

Deciphering the setlist for a King Gizzard show is inherently difficult, especially on this *Nonagon Infinity* tour, given that album's fluid structure. Four of the LP's nine songs contain the refrain "Nonagon Infinity opens the door," which acts like a hypnotist's trigger phrase to snap the listener back into reality.

The band toyed with the concept of infinity, rarely coming to a full stop. Songs weaved together, not really the so-called "tease," but something much more orchestrated and concrete. Even when guitarists **Joey Walker**and **Cook Craig** stopped to tune or MacKenzie paused to pick up his flute, dueling drummers **Michael Cavanagh** and **Eric Moore** kept pounding out 16th notes in line with **Lucas Skinner**'s driving bass.

The first real stop came nearly a half hour into the show before the band jumped back into "Trapdoor," off 2015's *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon*. King Gizzard's show is such an intense maelstrom of sound that a bouncy number like "Trapdoor" or the three-part jazz odyssey "The River" are considered cooldown songs. These sonic reprieves were short-lived, though. "Trapdoor" gave way to a ripping four-song medley, including "Cellophane" and "I'm in Your Mind Fuzz" off the 2014 album of the same name. Harmonica specialist **Ambrose Kenny-Smith** added a killer harp solo, and the crowd repaid him and his bandmates by spraying them with beer and hurling cans at the stage—sins deserving of a far worse level of hell, as far as the band's electrical equipment was concerned.

The growling guitars and booming amplifiers prevailed for a show-closing take on "Head On/Pill" from 2013's *Float Along – Fill Your Lungs*. The extended outro included sections of "Cellophane" and "Evil Death Roll," before MacKenzie's melancholy reminder: "I ate the wrong... pill."

Psychedelic music is often described as ethereal and otherworldly. But King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard's twist on psychedelia is almost animalistic: No matter how far down into the depths it goes, it's still tethered to the earth like a primal heartbeat.

Matt Nestor

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DELFEST

ALLEGANY COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
CUMBERLAND, MD.
MAY 26-29

Festivals take on the character of their creator. In the case of DelFest, that's **Del McCoury**. A bluegrass legend who has roots back to Bill Monroe, Del has an incredibly outgoing personality. He's a storyteller who doesn't take himself too seriously, a man who believes in family—he formed a band with his children, and even his 4-year-old grandson **Vassar McCoury** came out and played a stand-up bass taller than he was—and, in general, Del has an infectious optimism.

"Del yeah!" was the cry of the festival, and it's one that permeated the Allegany County Fairgrounds. Like "aloha" or "shalom," it had multiple meanings, from, "That jam kicked ass," to "Well, I forgot the last five chord changes, but look how nicely I recovered to nail the chorus!"

What separates bluegrass festivals from other gatherings is that the expectation is reversed. Instead of playing safe sets to try and show new audiences what they're about, bluegrass acts tend to be more experimental. Bands inspire each other to reach greater heights, and there's nothing a string band loves more than bringing guests onto the stage. The McCoury Band's **Jason Carter** sat in with **Yonder Mountain String Band** and had an insane fiddle-off with **Allie Kral**. Kral was no slouch either, joining **Fruition** for a "Fire" worthy of the name. **Horseshoes & Hand Grenades**' set went nuclear when **Railroad Earth**'s **Tim Carbone** joined to cover Gnarls Barkley's "Crazy." Moreover, the crowd was always on constant alert because Del was liable to sit in at any time.

The final two days were highlighted by **Greensky Bluegrass**; their Saturday late night set being one of the strongest performances of the festival. Mixing intense jams with strong songwriting and bizarre cover combinations ("Light Up or Leave Me Alone" with "Dancing on the Ceiling" folded in, "China Cat Sunflower"> "Big Shot"), Greensky worked the sweaty, mud-caked crowd into a dancing frenzy until 4 a.m.

In the past, DelFest has been plagued by weather. There have been freezing nights, hailstorms and even a tornado. While the ninth edition was hot and there was a fun storm on Thursday, it looked like the bullet had been dodged. Then, during Friday's Fruition set, **Jay Cobb Anderson** decided to tempt fate and called on the rain to fall. A deluge followed, clearing the field of all but the diehards. Round two came during **The Infamous Stringdusters**' set and lasted throughout **Elephant Revival**'s performance. Tents were destroyed, the Potomac Stage became a mud pit and everything got soaked. Most festivals would have been ruined at this point. DelFest looked around, gave a collective sigh, cleaned up the mess and spent the next two days going back to dancing.

David Steinberg

The festival's namesake joins Sam Bush at DelFest

DARK STAR JUBILEE

LEGEND VALLEY
THORNVILLE, OHIO
MAY 27-29

Rather than kick back for Memorial Day weekend, the seven members of **Dark Star Orchestra** enjoyed a working vacation at the fifth-annual Dark Star Jubilee. With a headlining slot each night, DSO displayed a scholarly understanding of the Dead's catalog, then infused it with enough personality and blissful energy to explore the sonic boundaries.

After the group recreated the Dead's March 27, 1987 Hartford Civic Center performance on the first day of the festival, nearly everyone in the band commented that they had attended that concert. Their second show was an elective setlist that brought out "Box of Rain," "Unbroken Chain" and inventive transitions—"Help on the Way"> "Slipknot"> "Foolish Heart" and "Scarlet Begonias"> "Rubin and Cherise"> "Scarlet Begonias Jam." This set also included a sizzling "White Rabbit" opener with **Lisa Mackey** on vocals and guest appearances by Jefferson Airplane/**Hot Tuna** members **Jorma Kaukonen** and **Jack Casady**, two of the musicians who helped make that song famous. Later, **Yonder Mountain String Band**'s **Allie Kral** added fiddle to "Dire Wolf" and "Catfish John," which Jerry Garcia often covered. The final evening found DSO tackling the classic, three-set Aug. 27, 1972 performance from Veneta, Ore. (Springfield Creamery Benefit), and they handled it beautifully.

The Jubilee began with **Melvin Seals**, backed by DSO, playing a Jerry Garcia Band set. Other DSO side projects included: drummer **Dino English**'s **Owsley County, Like Father, Like Son** (**Rob Eaton** and **Rob Jr.** with

Melissa Steinberg

Rob and **Tom Barraco** plus RatDog's **Robin Sylvester**) and Dark Star Orchestra guitarist **Jeff Mattson** knocking out Zen Tricksters tunes with the Barraco and Mackey.

Interpretations of the Dead, Garcia and Bob Dylan were prevalent all three days. **Steve Kimock & Friends**, which featured Kimock, **Jay Lane**, **Jeff Chimenti**, **Dan Lebowitz** and **Bobby Vega** offered standout versions of "That's What Love Will Make You Do," "Queen Jane Approximately" and a closing, instrumental take on "Stella Blue."

Hot Tuna offered the biggest thrills for the sold-out crowd and many of the musicians. The classic group's members also shot through a rare electric trio set that featured 14 songs, including: "A Little Faster," "99 Year Blues," "Can't Get Satisfied" and "Hit Single #1." The next afternoon, Kaukonen and Casady offered an acoustic set. The 19 songs—including "Hesitation Blues," "Death Don't Have No Mercy," "Good Shepherd" and "I Know You Rider"—were received rapturously and reverently.

Jorma Kaukonen Meets DSO at the Jubilee

The crowd's boisterous side let loose during each day's high-energy dose of bluegrass from Yonder Mountain, **Rumpke Mountain Boys** and **Leftover Salmon**.

With the low-key, friendly atmosphere and impressive, animated performances, it's likely that many will take Jerry Garcia's advice and meet, once again, at the Jubilee. ***John Patrick Gatta***

John Patrick Gatta

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The 2016 *Relix* Festival Guide: Set III

Don't worry that summer is almost halfway over. When it comes to music festivals, fall may be the new summer—keeping those kaleidoscopic warm weather vibes alive every weekend of every month.

Lineups are current as of press time and will continue to be updated at the newly refreshed relix.com/festivals. Be sure to grab a copy of our June issue for more information on an assortment of other festivals.
If you see an **(R)** next to a listing, then be sure to visit us at the *Relix* booth onsite.

Feed More Festival
7/17 // Pittsburgh, PA
Cold War Kids, The Lone Bellow, The Stone Foxes, Lucy Dacus, The Commonheart, Derek Woodz Band, Swiss Army, more
pittsburghfoodbank.org/feedmore

Grateful Get Down
7/29–30 // Shartlesville, PA
New Riders of the Purple Sage, Pink Talking Fish, Steal Your Face, Out of the Beardspace, Willie Jack & the Northern Light, Muppets Titanium Stardust Machine
gratefulgetdown.com

A Bear's Picnic
8/4–7 // Milmont, PA
Melvin Seals & JGB, John Kadlecik Band, Godfathers of Pot Medicine Show, Willie Jack & Northern Light, Still Hand String Band, more
abearspicnic.com

Flood City Music Festival
8/4–7 // Johnstown, PA
Grace Potter, Charles Bradley & His Extraordinaires, The Revivalists, Anders Osborne, Tab Benoit, The Record Company, Marc Broussard, Samantha Fish, TAUK, The London Souls, more
floodcitymusic.com

Hinterland Music Festival
8/5–6 // St. Charles, IA
Willie Nelson, Ray LaMontagne, Grace Potter, Cold War Kids, Lake Street Dive, Houndmouth, Shovels & Rope, San Fermin, Turnpike Troubadours, Hayes Carll, Pokey LaFarge, more
hinterlandiowa.com

Big Wu Family Reunion
8/12–13 // Morristown, MN
Big Wu, Leon Russell, Peter Rowan, Dean Magraw, Allie Kral, Cornmeal, Black River Revue, Useful Jenkins, White Iron Band, Frogleg, The Last Revel, more
bigwufamilyreunion.com

For the Funk of it Festival
8/12–14 // Belden, CA
Orgone, Nigel Hall, Object Heavy with Fred Wesley, Jelly Bread, Mojo Green, Ideateam, Analog Son, Delta Nove, Joy and Madness, more
ftffest.com

Mystic Blues Festival
8/12–14 // North Stonington, CT
Dumpstaphunk, Dr. John & The Nite Trippers, Blackburn, Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters, Paul Gabriel, Greg Piccolo & Heavy Juice, more
mysticbluesfestival.com

Reggae Fest Chicago
8/13 // Chicago, IL
Toots & the Maytals, Iration, Lee "Scratch" Perry, Hepcat, Budos Band, Daby Toure, Derrick Morgan, Charley Organaire & The Sunshine Festival Band, more
reggaefestchicago.com

Rocky Mountain Folks Festival
8/19–21 // Lyons, CO
The Decemberists, Conor Oberst, Lucinda Williams, Passenger, Dougie MacLean, Andrew Bird, Darrell Scott, Parker Millsap, The Lone Bellow, more
bluegrass.com/folks

Jam In The Trees
8/26–27 // Black Mountain, NC
The Wood Brothers, Del McCoury Band, Junior Brown, Willie Watson, The Burrito Brothers, Mipso, Chatham County Line, more
pisgahbrewing.com/shows/jam-in-the-trees

Wildwood Revival
8/26–28 // Athens, GA
The Lone Bellow, Gillian Welch, Houndmouth, Athens Cowboy Choir, Hackensaw Boys, Lost Bayou Ramblers, Sammy Brue, Legendary Shack Shakers, JP Harris, Ancient Cities, Susto, Julie Rhodes, Indianola, more
wildwoodrevival.com

Bumbershoot
9/2–4 // Seattle, WA
Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, Death Cab for Cutie, Kygo, Tame Impala, G-Eazy, Halsey, Pretty Lights, DJ Snake, Porter Robinson, Zeds Dead, Bryson Tiller, Michael Franti & Spearhead, Run the Jewels, Billy Idol, ZHU, Fetty Wap, Marshmello, Father John Misty, Explosions in the Sky, more
bumbershoot.com

Electric Zoo
9/2–4 // New York, NY
Bassnectar, Tiësto, Hardwell, Carnage, Porter Robinson, The Chainsmokers, Steve Aoki, Big Gigantic, Flux Pavilion, Juicy J, Lil Dicky, The Polish Ambassador, more
electriczoofestival.com

Four Corners Folk Festival
9/2–4 // Pagosa Springs, CO
The Del McCoury Band, The Milk Carton Kids, The O'Connor Band, Sara Watkins, Darrell Scott, John Fullbright, The Black Lillies, Sierra Hull, The East Pointers, more
folkwest.com

(R) North Coast Music Festival
9/2–4 // Chicago, IL
ODESZA, Bassnectar, Zedd, Umphrey's McGee, Logic, GROUPLOVE, Matt & Kim, The Claypool Lennon Delirium, Galantis, Action Bronson, Juicy J, Greensky Bluegrass, Sleigh Bells, The Floozies, TAUK, Twiddle, The Revivalists, Vulfpeck, more
northcoastfestival.com
PREVIOUSLY... Widespread Panic returned to Chicago to headline North Coast Music Festival in 2015, peppering their set with covers of Bloodkin's "Who Do You Belong To?," Neil Young's "Walk On" and Howlin' Wolf's "Tail Dragger," as well as Murray McLauchlan's "Honky Red."

North Coast Music Festival

Rhythm and Roots Festival
9/2–4 // Charlestown, RI
Bruce Hornsby & The Noisemakers, Taj Mahal Trio, Lucinda Williams, David Grisman Sextet, Dave Alvin & Phil Alvin with The Guilty Ones, Donna the Buffalo, Dustbowl Revival, more
rhythmandroots.com

Riot Fest Denver
9/2–4 // Denver, CO
The Original Misfits, Ween, Death Cab for Cutie, Jane's Addiction, Sleater-Kinney, Nas, Deftones, Fitz & The Tantrums, Descendents, NOFX, Bad Religion, Tyler, The Creator, Pepper, Jake Bugg, Sleigh Bells, Pepper, Chevy Metal, Vince Staples, The Dandy Warhols, Yo La Tengo, The Hold Steady, more
riotfest.org/denver

Sonic Boom
9/3–4 // Edmonton, Alberta
The Lumineers, Twenty One Pilots, Halsey, Vance Joy, Jake Bugg, Atlas Genius, Zella Day, Modern Space, AWOLNATION, more
sonicboomfest.com

Hopscotch Music Festival
9/8–10 // Raleigh, NC
Erykah Badu, Gary Clark Jr., Wolf Parade, Wye Oak, Beach House, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Television, Young Thug, Big Freedia, Vince Staples, Sylvan Esso, Andrew Bird, more
hopscotchmusicfest.com

Bestival
9/8–11 // Isle of Wight, England
The Cure, Major Lazer, Hot Chip, Diplo, Fatboy Slim, Bastille, Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley, ODESZA, Ride, Wolf Alice, Animal Collective, more
bestival.net

Big Blues Bender
9/8–11 // Las Vegas, NV
Keb' Mo', Delbert McClinton, Beth Hart, Tab Benoit, Bobby Rush & The Bender Brass, Roy Rogers & The Delta Rhythm Kings, Cyril Neville's Royal Southern Brotherhood, Jimmy Thackery & The Drivers, Samantha Fish, more
bigbluesbender.com

Great North Music & Arts Festival
9/9–11 // Minot, ME
Tractorbeam, Dr. Fameus feat. Aron Magner, Earphunk, G-Nome Project, Scientists of Sound, Bleep Bloop, Freddy Todd, Ben Silver, Yheti, Perkulator, Of the Trees, more
greatnorth.us

David Shaw's Big River Get Down
9/10 // Hamilton, OH
The Revivalists, The Wild Feathers, The Temperance Movement, The Marcus King Band, Maggie Koerner, The Trongone Band, more
bigrivergetdown.com

Lollapalooza Berlin
9/10–11 // Berlin, Germany
Radiohead, Kings of Leon, Major Lazer, New Order, Milky Chance, The 1975, Zedd, Kaiser Chiefs, James Blake, G-Eazy, The Chainsmokers, ODESZA, Catfish & The Bottlemen, more
lollapalooza.de.com

LouFest
9/10-11 // St. Louis, MO
LCD Soundsystem, Chris Stapleton, Ms. Lauryn Hill, Band of Horses, Big Gigantic, The Kills, Buddy Guy, Shakey Graves, St. Lucia, Vince Staples, Greensky Bluegrass, Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Charles Bradley & His Extraordinaires, Anderson .Paak & The Free Nationals, Frightened Rabbit, more
loufest.com
PREVIOUSLY... LouFest 2015 was truly the solo-project showcase of the summer. The Killers' Brandon Flowers, The Strokes' Albert Hammond Jr. and fun.'s Nate Ruess all played under their own names during the event.

Deep Roots Mountain Revival
9/15-18 // Masontown, WV
Greensky Bluegrass, Jamey Johnson, Leftover Salmon, The David Grisman Sextet, Blackberry Smoke, Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives, Corey Smith, Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder, Love and Theft, Cabinet, Melvin Seals & JGB, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, Fruition, more
mountainrevival.com

Ottawa CityFolk
9/15-18 // Ottawa, ON
James Bay, Dropkick Murphys, Vance Joy, The New Pornographers, Blind Pilot, Bryson Tiller, X Ambassadors, Lake Street Dive, The Last Waltz: Music of The Band, more
cityfolkfestival.com

Middle Waves
9/16-17 // Fort Wayne, IN
The Flaming Lips, Best Coast, Doomtree, JEFF the Brotherhood, Sidewalk Chalk, Metavari, Heaven's Gateway Drugs, Either/Or, more
middlewaves.com

FreshGrass
9/16-18 // North Adams, MA
Old Crow Medicine Show, Glen Hansard, Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder, The Devil Makes Three, Rosanne Cash, The Infamous Stringdusters, Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver, Ruthie Foster, Aoife O'Donovan, Alison Brown, more
freshgrass.com

KAABOO Del Mar
9/16-18 // Del Mar, CA
Jimmy Buffett & The Coral Reefer Band, Aerosmith, Jack Johnson, Fall Out Boy, Lenny Kravitz, Hall & Oates, The Avett Brothers, The Chainsmokers, Steve Aoki, Goo Goo Dolls, GROUPLOVE, Jason Isbell, Capital Cities, Flo Rida, Ludacris, Gregg Allman, Citizen Cope, Shakey Graves, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, Blues Traveler, more
kaaboodelmar.com
PREVIOUSLY... Last year, Zac Brown Band brought their ever-evolving live show to the California coast with a diverse set that included covers of everything from Metallica to Bruno Mars.

Pickin' in the Pines
9/16-18 // Flagstaff, AZ
Sam Bush, Jerry Douglas presents The Earls of Leicester, The SteelDrivers, O'Connor Band featuring Mark O'Connor, Hogslop Stringband, The Badly Bent, Blue Moon, more
pickininthepines.org

Riot Fest Chicago
9/16-18 // Chicago, IL
The Original Misfits, Morrissey, Ween, Death Cab for Cutie, Rob Zombie, Social Distortion, Brand New, Nas, The Specials, Deftones, Fitz & The Tantrums, Jimmy Eat World, Refused, NOFX, Bad Religion, Pierce the Veil, All Time Low, Death Grips, The Hold Steady, Bob Mould, more
riotfest.org/chicago

Telluride Blues & Brews Festival
9/16-18 // Telluride, CO
Joe Walsh, Gary Clark Jr., The Mick Fleetwood Blues Band, Jason Isbell, Anders Osborne, Shakey Graves, North Mississippi Allstars, Shovels & Rope, Madisen Ward & The Mama Bear, The California Honeydrops, Con Brio, Israel Nash, more
telluridblues.com
PREVIOUSLY... Gregg Allman received some help an old friend in Telluride last year when Taj Mahal sat in with the Allman Brothers singer during his set. The collaboration was somewhat ceremonial, as Mahal had sat in with the Brothers 25 years prior on the Fred Shellman Memorial Stage for "Statesboro Blues." He joined Allman on the same tune this time around—the final performance on that very stage before Telluride Blues & Brews relocated in 2016.

TURF: Toronto Urban Roots Fest
9/16-18 // Toronto, Ontario
James Bay, Death Cab for Cutie, Barenaked Ladies, Dropkick Murphys, Lake Street Dive, The Felice Brothers, Explosions in the Sky, Jake Bugg, Lush, The Sheepdogs, The Hives, Drive-By Truckers, more
torontourbanrootsfest.com

Festival Palomino
9/17 // Shakopee, MN
Trampled By Turtles, The Arcs, Andrew Bird, Jake Bugg, Houndmouth, Frightened Rabbit, Elephant Revival, The Cactus Blossoms, Margaret Glaspy, Aubrie Sellers, The Brothers Comatose, more
festivalpalomino.com

Sound Summit
9/17 // Mill Valley, CA
Wilco, Los Lobos, Bill Frisell's Guitar in the Space Age, The Stone Foxes
soundsummit.net

Telluride Blues & Brews

(R) Grand Point North
9/17-18 // Burlington, VT
Grace Potter, Old Crow Medicine Show, Guster, The Wood Brothers, Kaleo, Blind Pilot, Kat Wright & The Indomitable Soul Band, The Record Company, Basia Bulat, Eliza Hardy Jones, Steady Betty, more
grandpointnorth.com
PREVIOUSLY... Last year country superstar Kenny Chesney made a surprise appearance to perform "Wild Child," his collaborative tune with Grace Potter. Potter and her band The Nocturnals had opened Chesney's massive stadium tour, and the pair developed a songwriting partnership during that time.

Lollapalooza Colombia
9/17-18 // Bogota, Colombia
Lana Del Rey, Disclosure, Wiz Khalifa, The Chainsmokers, Bomba Estereo, Nicky Romero, Silversun Pickups, Cage the Elephant, Vance Joy, Robin Schulz, Pennywise, Matt & Kim, City and Colour, Wild Nothing, more
lollapaloozaco.com

The New England Festy
9/17-18 // Canton, MA
The Infamous Stringdusters, Greensky Bluegrass, Josh Ritter, The Wood Brothers, Justin Townes Earle, David Wax Museum, Fruition, Sierra Hull, Lau, Session Americana, Old Salt Union, Garret Grass Gospel Hour
thenewenglandfesty.com

Santa Cruz Mountains Sol
9/17-18 // Felton, CA
Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros, George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic, G Love & Special Sauce, Shelia E., Steve Kimock, Pimps of Joytime, Third World, Katdelic, more
santacruzmountainsol.com

Thrival Innovation + Music Festival
9/20-24 // Pittsburgh, PA
The Chainsmokers, CHVRCHES, Thievery Corporation, Metric, Ty Dolla $ign, Lettuce, Rubblebucket, Wild Child, Daya, Hudson Mohawke, more
thrivalfestival.com

Symbiosis Gathering
9/22-25 // Oakdale, CA
FKA Twigs, Gramatik, RL Grime, Santigold, Ta-Ku, Warpaint, Beats Antique, Hundred Waters, Balkan Beat Box, The Gaslamp Killer, more
symbiosisgathering.com

The Hometown Get Down
9/23-24 // Clarksburg, MD
Love Canon, Dale and the Zdubs, Mary Lankford Band, Ron Holloway Band, Gypsy Soul Revival, The Dirty Grass Players, more
hometowngetdown.org

Catskill Chill Music Festival
9/23-25 // Lakewood, PA
Mike Gordon, Greensky Bluegrass, Keller Williams' Grateful Grass, Break Science, Electron, George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic, Dopapod, Deep Banana Blackout, Kung Fu, The Werks, Particle, Zach Deputy, Ryan Montbleau, Orgone, The Nth Power, The Main Squeeze, Pink Talking Fish, more
catskillchill.com
PREVIOUSLY... In 2015, Twiddle paid tribute to the Grateful Dead with a special set that included sit-ins from Kung Fu's Tim Palmieri and Todd Stoops as well as Chris Houser of The Werks, and Cats Under the Stars' Josh Dobbs and Ryan Clausen.

Life Is Beautiful
9/23-25 // Las Vegas, NV
Mumford & Sons, J. Cole, Major Lazer, The Lumineers, G-Eazy, The Shins, Flume, Jane's Addiction, Bassnectar, Leon Bridges, Chromeo, Young the Giant, Die Antwoord, Kongos, City and Colour, Gramatik, Warpaint, more
lifeisbeautiful.com

Music Tastes Good
9/23-25 // Long Beach, CA
Iron & Wine, De La Soul, Dr. Dog, Warpaint, Living Colour, Son Little, Pokey LaFarge, Easy Star All-Stars, Melvins, Twin Peaks, Vintage Trouble, The Specials, Sylvan Esso, Squeeze more
mtglb.co

Pilgrimage Music & Cultural Festival
9/24-25 // Franklin, TN
Beck, Kacey Musgraves, Violent Femmes, The Arcs, Cake, City and Colour, Shakey Graves, Better Than Ezra, Kaleo, The Struts, Margo Price, Brothers Osborne, Blind Pilot, Langhorne Slim & The Law, Son Little, Big Sam's Funky Nation, more
pilgrimagefestival.com

Laid Back Festival Colorado
9/25 // Morrison, CO
Gregg Allman, ZZ Top, Jaimoe's Jasssz Band, Richie Furay Band, Lucie Silvas, People's Blues of Richmond, Gabriel Kelley, Levon
laidbackfest.com

Devils Backbone Hoopla
9/29-10/2 // Roseland, VA
The Revivalists, Old 97's, Futurebirds, Andy Frasco & The U.N., Holy Ghost Tent Revival, Dylan LeBlanc, The Trongone Band, Ryan Beaver, SUSTO, Rainbow Kitten Surprise, Major & The Monbacks, Bryan Elijah Smith & The Wild Hearts, Jeremiah Tall, more
dbbrewingcompany.com

Bear Creek Bayou
9/30-10/1 // New Orleans, LA
The Flaming Lips, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, Lettuce, Soulive, Foundation of Funk, Dumpstaphunk, The Floozies, Lotus, The Nth Power, Papadosio, Earphunk, Zigaboo Modeliste & the Funk Revue, more
bearcreekbayou.com

Austin City Limits
9/30-10/2, 10/7-9 // Austin, TX
Radiohead, Mumford & Sons, Kendrick Lamar, LCD Soundsystem, Major Lazer, Kygo, Willie Nelson, The Chainsmokers, Flume, Chris Stapleton, M83, HAIM, Cage the Elephant, Schoolboy Q, Band of Horses, Young the Giant, Local Natives, Foals, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, more
aclfestival.com
PREVIOUSLY... The Strokes returned to the stage at Austin City Limits 2015 for their final U.S. date of the year. They filled their set with many of their well-known songs, and busted out of the rare *Room on Fire* cut "What Ever Happened?"

Roots N Blues N BBQ Festival
9/30-10/2 // Columbia, MO
The Avett Brothers, Grace Potter, Jason Isbell, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, Ben Folds, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, The Devil Makes Three, Houndmouth, Shovels & Rope, Blues Traveler, Sam Bush, The Oh Hellos, The Budos Band, The Blind Boys of Alabama, Jackie Greene Band, more
rootsnbluesnbbq.com

Bob Lind

Return of the "Elusive Butterfly"

Fifty years ago, Bob Lind was all over AM radio with "Elusive Butterfly," a shimmering, orchestrally ornamented, self-penned, Top 5 folk-rock hit produced by the legendary Jack Nitzsche and later covered by Aretha Franklin, Petula Clark and Dolly Parton, among many others. Poetic and ethereal—"Don't be concerned, it will not harm you, it's only me pursuing something I'm not sure of/ Across my dreams with nets of wonder, I chase the bright elusive butterfly of love"—the song's definitive interpretation evades even Lind himself. "It wasn't concocted consciously," he says today. "A curtain opened and it was there. I just grabbed it and wrote it down."

Lind was only 23 when he released the tune on World Pacific Records, and although other compositions (particularly "Cheryl's Goin' Home") found favor with numerous artists—Richie Havens, The Turtles, The Blues Project—after a couple of sputtering follow-ups, Lind's music career wound down. By the early '70s, he was out. "I let my hatred of the business outweigh my desire to persist, a childish and much-regretted mistake," he says.

He subsequently took an assortment of jobs—some old fans might've noticed his byline appearing regularly in the tongue-in-cheek pseudo-tabloid *Weekly World News*—and he also honed his writing chops via novels, short stories, plays and film scripts. In 2001, the Britpop group Pulp paid tribute with "Bob Lind (The Only Way Is Down)" and, three years later, Arlo Guthrie encouraged Lind to return to music. But it took until 2012 for Lind to return to the studio. That year, he released *Finding You Again*, a stellar collection of new material, and now he's followed that up with *Magellan Was Wrong*, which may just be the finest work he's ever recorded. Both albums were produced by Jamie Hoover of the power-pop band The Spongetones.

"My themes haven't changed much," says the now-Florida-based Lind about his new music. "[My songs have] always been more local than global—intimate love and/or the yearning for it. I've retained much of the lust and passion of my earlier work, but my viewpoint has matured. There are songs I can write now that I could never have written in my gushy 20s."

When he performs today, Lind, of course, still returns to "Elusive Butterfly," but, he says, "I'm not an oldies act. I have no wish to revolve around my own corpse when I'm writing so much better now." Nothing elusive about that. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Moon Hooch

An Energy Feedback Loop

Though they are far from their days busking in the New York subways—at least in terms of career success, if not in actual time lapsed—the three members of Moon Hooch are not content with simply playing concerts. These days, they want to start a revolution every time they take the stage—not a cultural or political revolution, but one of the spirit. In stark contrast to the explosive, dance-floor quality of their live shows and studio recordings, the musicians are reserved in conversation, thoughtfully extolling the virtues of positive thinking and taking care of your mind and body.

"All of us have changed as people and, with that, our perspectives on music and our approach to music have changed," says horn player Wenzl McGowen, who comprises one-third of Moon Hooch along with fellow saxophone player Mike Wilbur and drummer James Muschler. "All of us have grown and have become more focused and are more aware of the present moment. That new awareness manifests itself in the precision of this new album."

Red Sky, which dropped in mid-June, finds the Brooklyn-based trio honing their unique brand of, as McGowen puts it, "electronic music played with acoustic instruments." With the basic setup of two horns and a drum set, plus minimal production and overdubs, Moon Hooch create high-energy, pulsing dance music that would feel right at home in a New York City nightclub. "When you play with another musician, you can always get closer to perceiving the beat at the same time," McGowen says. "The three of us have gotten to this place where we try to really focus on each other—100 percent, all the time—and that makes the music much tighter. It gets closer and closer to sounding like techno music or electronic dance music, although we are playing all the instruments live."

After attempting to record the album once with almost all overdubs, the group found that the approach wasn't working. "That just turned out to be totally missing the point," McGowen says. "The live energy was completely lost."

Moon Hooch feed off of that live energy, as do their fans. McGowen, who wants to write a book on collective consciousness, describes his connection with a live audience as an "energy feedback loop," where both musicians and dancers amplify each other's vivacity. But in terms of his goal for the album itself, McGowen had a slightly simpler dream: "It's gonna be the soundtrack to many fun parties." ***Matt Inman***

Henry Diltz (Bob Lind)

PEARL JAM • THE KILLERS • J. COLE

SNOOP DOGG • KASKADE • WIZ KHALIFA • BASSNECTAR • ICE CUBE • HALSEY • FKA TWIGS

DJ SNAKE • BILLY IDOL • THE CHAINSMOKERS • NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS • STEVE ANGELLO

FLOSSTRADAMUS • MIGUEL • PURITY RING • DIE ANTWOORD • TYLER, THE CREATOR • MAC MILLER

CYPRESS HILL • MASTODON • ARKELLS • WOLF PARADE • COLD WAR KIDS • THIEVERY CORPORATION

GIRL TALK • YG • BAAUER • TORY LANEZ • BIG GIGANTIC • GRACE POTTER • BØRNS • METHOD MAN & REDMAN

RAE SREMMURD • DATSIK • COLEMAN HELL • KEHLANI • RA RA RIOT • WINTERSLEEP • SAVAGES • JOEY BADA$$

KEYS N KRATES • ROBERT DELONG • SZA • JON BELLION • PROTOJE • ANDERSON .PAAK & THE FREE NATIONALS • LIDO

HUDSON MOHAWKE • GIVERS • KALEO • DIIV • WHITE DENIM • ALLEN STONE • BULLY • HUCCI

MARK FARINA • LUNICE • BAS • BRAIDS • THE GLORIOUS SONS • HIPPIE SABOTAGE • SHAWN HOOK • MIAMI HORROR

STICK FIGURE • THE FUNK HUNTERS • THE ZOLAS • THE ELWINS • THE LONDON SOULS • ESTA

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EUGENE MIRMAN • KYLE KINANE • JERMAINE FOWLER • THE LUCAS BROTHERS • MORGAN MURPHY

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5 ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Mycle Wastman SEATTLE

THE WHOLE PACKAGE

"I still enjoy discovering new music, even if it's music that might have come out a few years ago," Seattle resident and *The Voice* alum **Mycle Wastman** says while surveying the list of musical luminaries that his hometown has produced. Wastman started performing as a child and continued to hone his brand of soul-influenced singer-songwriter music while serving as an Army private and, later, as a chaplain's assistant in the Army Reserves. In 2012, he landed a spot on *The Voice,* where judges described him as "having the whole package," thanks to his mix of R&B, pop and rock. (Wastman has always been drawn to acts with a similar complete set of skills, including Al Green, Michael Jackson and Led Zeppelin.) After being coached by CeeLo Green on the program, Wastman hit the road as a solo act and, upon meeting Boyd Tinsley, joined a new act the Dave Matthews Band fiddler was producing, Crystal Garden. "Boyd was at one of my shows in New York City and approached me afterward and asked if I was interested in being part of a project he was putting together." Wastman jumped at the chance to work with Tinsley and became a member of the band, which the fiddler floats in and out of based on his DMB commitments. Wastman is also putting the final touches on his third solo album, the double-disc *Funkshui/Pictures in the Attic*, which showcases both his funk and acoustic influences. "While I was working with Crystal Garden, I was still writing my own music, but it was a great experience to work with a group of talented musicians."

myclewastman.com ***Dylan Gray***

The Whiskey Treaty Roadshow

THE BERKSHIRES & CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

FIVE VOICES, ONE BAND

Judging by their name, you'd think that the members of **The Whiskey Treaty Roadshow** hail from south of the Mason-Dixon Line rather than the Berkshires. The quintet, which formed in 2014 after a festival in Greenfield, Mass., is built on a brotherhood—or the idea that what's good on its own is better together. Instead of a traditional lineup, Whiskey Treaty is made up of five frontmen, each singing and playing his own songs and each with a distinct vibe and sound. "It's not some kind of guitar lesson where everyone's sitting around playing the same thing," says **Billy Keane**, noting that the band typically hires a rhythm section. "You're spreading out the tonal sounds." Someone leads, the others support and then the torch is passed. The group's live album and DVD, *The Heart of the Run*, is proof that their unconventional band structure not only makes sense, but also offers something truly unique in the Americana space. There are common themes—bottled courage, Western Massachusetts—but a show can easily move between Paul Simon-esque pop and Avett Brothers-inspired folk, between raucous drinking tunes and softer ballads. "We try and set up our setlists to undulate between different sounds," says **Tory Hanna**, "and that's part of the draw—it's never boring."

thewhiskeytreaty.com ***Kiran Herbert***

Backup Planet NASHVILLE, TENN.

IMPROVISATIONAL ESCAPE PLANS

How do you decide on the name **Backup Planet**? **Ben Cooper**, keyboardist and co-founder of the Nashville-based quartet, recalls coming up with the moniker during a stressful day in college. "Every television station you turned on was like, 'The world's coming to an end,'" he says. "It was one of those days where you're kind of like, 'Man, I wish I had a 'backup planet' and could escape the mundanity of everyday life.'" After meeting guitarist **Gavin Donati** at a Phish show when both were freshmen at the University of Tennessee, the pair started playing together in various bands around Knoxville. They moved to Nashville three years ago "searching for more musicianship, production and just professionalism in the industry," says Cooper. The group's lineup was soon solidified with the additions of bassist **Blake Gallant** and drummer **Chris Potocik**. Backup Planet dropped their debut album, *Element*, last year—an eight-track synthesis of the band's ability to move between keyboard-led funk and guitar-heavy rock. (Cooper and Donati cite everyone from Earth, Wind & Fire to Dickey Betts as influences, and characterize their live show as very improvisational.) "Music is very therapeutic; it's very spiritual," Cooper says, returning to the "backup planet" idea that originally inspired him. "For us, it's kind of an escape." backupplanetmusic.com ***Lilli Friedman***

Seratones SHREVEPORT, LA.

NO FEAR OF DIVERSITY

Even at a time when co-mingling genres is commonplace, Shreveport, La.'s **Seratones** stand alone. Rising from the ashes of assorted punk bands, Seratones mix soul, blues, gospel, disco, funk, surf, jazz, psychedelia and vintage lounge with a gritty energy belying their roots. The music is sexy, sultry, swirly, passionate and moshable all at the same time. Vocalist/guitarist **A.J. Haynes**' church-trained voice, wavering between Aretha Franklin, Billie Holiday and Nina Simone—with a hint of Wendy O. Williams—is an instant hook, the pillar supporting the band's wide-ranging palette. "Everyone's working together, but there has to be a voice," Haynes says modestly. Seratones make it clear where they come from, opening their debut, *Get Gone*, with "Choking on Your Spit," a punk thrasher with a deep funk groove. "Tide" shifts tempos with a '70s easy listening cum soul send up riding surf guitar licks; "Chandelier" and "Sun" channel vintage Detroit garage; "Headtrip" is a pure rockabilly rocker. There's no fear of diversity here. "The power of music is transformative," Haynes says. "Bands like MC5 or Little Richard—that energy and spirit is something we can't live without. We're trying to make a space where you can go through all the emotions that [music brings]."

seratones.bandcamp.com ***Glenn BurnSilver***

The Broadcast ASHEVILLE, N.C.

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME IN REVERSE

Over 50 years ago, Bob Dylan traveled—as many would after him—from the American heartland to New York City, singing his way to the stage at The Bitter End in Greenwich Village. For **Caitlin Krisko** and her band **The Broadcast**, the story began at The Bitter End and wound up in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where they currently reside. Like Dylan in reverse, The Broadcast grew restless in the city that never sleeps and dropped everything to move to Asheville, N.C., in 2010. Krisko and guitarist **Aaron Austin** spent the next couple of years working as a songwriting duo, and the band released their debut LP, *Dodge the Arrow*, in 2013. The record was an exploration of "bombastic, larger-than-life" sounds, Krisko explains. But with maturity came the desire to explore something more grounded—something rooted in the Americana sounds of their new home in Appalachia. (Although, Krisko, who grew up in New York, says her singing has always had soul.) In late 2014, The Broadcast got "the call" from producer Jim Scott (Tedeschi Trucks Band, Tom Petty), Krisko recalls giddily, and the band began recording their sophomore effort, *From the Horizon*, which was released in June. The record embodies a new sense of home, comfortably seating The Broadcast in the company of their Americana contemporaries. "Songwriting, the narrative element to the music, was really important to us for this record," Krisko says. "We were listening to a lot of Eagles, Tedeschi Trucks Band and Paul Simon while we were writing. It was really fun to step outside of ourselves and our own personal experiences and to be able to pull from the world around us to create stories for *From the Horizon*."

thebroadcastmusic.com ***Matt Nestor***

Kevin Morby

BY JUSTIN JACOBS

When Kevin Morby moved from Kansas City to New York City at the age of 18, he was a high-school dropout who had $600 to his name and knew exactly one person in a metropolis of eight million. And as he tells it nearly a decade later, "It was the most vivid and magical time in my life." Such is Morby's world—in which any door could be the right one, so you might as well make a choice, walk on through and see what happens. "The whole thing could've gone miserably wrong," he says, "But it just went incredibly right for me."

In April, Morby released his third solo album, *Singing Saw*, on indie label Dead Oceans. The record is a gorgeous collection of meandering, sun-kissed folk-rock and loose, frayed rock-and-roll. *Singing Saw* arrives three years after Morby bid farewell to Brooklyn psych-folk collective Woods, and two years after he dropped his sophmore solo album. The new album showcases his light, Leonard Cohen vocals and poetic storytelling; it's his most purposeful, well-crafted work to date, but no less the product of circumstance, chance and pure surrender.

Morby was in New York for just three days when a new friend invited him to crash and babysit her kid brother. A gig as a bike delivery boy at a restaurant tossed him amid the eatery's regulars, who would soon form Woods; when the restaurant's bartender and original band member Christian DeRoeck moved out of the band's shared house, Morby moved in.

"I was surrounded by this band that was forming. I was 19 and they were all around 29; they seemed so much older than me at the time," remembers Morby. "One day, [Woods singer Jeremy Earl] asked if I knew how to play bass. I said, 'No—you guys are a real band, and I can't even play.' But after a day or two, I knew I had to join."

And so Kevin Morby picked up the bass and joined a band that, during the following three years, became one of indie-rock's most beloved. Besides being barred from many venues until it was time for him to hit the stage—a problem quickly solved with a fake ID—Morby's new life as a touring musician allowed him to collect new, positive experiences. He formed The Babies with Vivian Girls guitarist Cassie Ramone as a scrappy punk outfit for the two to try out songs not fit for their main bands—and that taste of independence had him wanting more.

"I felt people reacting to my songwriting [in The Babies], and I wanted to start doing it on my own, not at the will of other people," says Morby. "These two bands were ruling my life; I wanted to set my own rules."

In 2013, following tours with both Woods and The Babies, Morby decided it was time to try out a solo career. He'd been accumulating unused songs on the road, and he recorded them for that year's well-received *Harlem River*. His quick follow-up, 2014's *Still Life*, garnered even better reviews and more attention.

Though his solo career took off almost immediately, Morby found that New York had become a burden, and the untethering from his bands mirrored his floating away from the city. In 2014, he moved to the quiet, secluded Los Angeles neighborhood of Mount Washington, where the previous tenants had left an upright piano ready for a new pair of hands.

"I didn't play piano at all, but I'd always wanted to. So I began to learn," he says.

"I started to write songs immediately on piano; it was exciting to have a new instrument, a completely fresh landscape."

He was as inspired by his new piano as he was by his new neighborhood, and the songs began to pour out. "It's a spooky environment there—beautiful but eerie, and that made its way into the music," says Morby, who has also laid down long-term roots back in Kansas City in recent years. "I started to notice threads between certain songs. I wrote about 25, and some started to feel like a family, like different parts of a story."

With a batch of new songs in tow, Morby decamped to Woodstock to lay down what would grow into *Singing Saw*. He partnered with songwriter and producer Sam Cohen (who contributed percussion, guitar, keyboard and bass) and invited friends to flesh out the songs with rich backing vocals, wheezing saxophones, trumpets, strings and—on the title track—an actual singing saw. Drummer Nick Kinsey even brought his friend Marco Benevento to some initial sessions to add backing piano. "He was the most bed-headed, charismatic guy. I didn't know who he was at the time," laughs Morby. "He just happens to be one of the most talented contemporary piano players alive. I didn't realize until later that night—it's totally 'a thing' that he's playing on my album!"

Singing Saw arrives sounding every bit as organic and free-flowing as the path of its creator. Melodies creep along with dabbled piano and occasionally ragged, cranked-up guitars. The music is lovely but never delicate. Morby waves a torch toward real life tragedy on the punchy, aching "I Have Been to the Mountain," his ode to Eric Garner, who was killed by an NYPD officer in 2014. "That man lived in this town 'til that pig took him down," he sings. "And have you heard the sound of a man stop breathing, pleading?" It's chilling inside and out, but never forced or heavy-handed.

With the release, Morby is hitting stages across the U.S. and Europe, including festival and club dates, which will surely carry new fans toward him. And whatever's meant to happen next—well, it will.

Bob Babisch

BY BRADLEY TUCKER

BOB BABISCH IS the vice president of entertainment at Milwaukee Summerfest, one of the longest running annual festivals in the country. Summerfest has existed for 49 years, and Babisch has been on staff for 39 of those years, helping to develop what is billed as "The World's Largest Music Festival." His team works year round to program 11 days of music, a schedule that is uncommon in the festival world.

Can you talk about your first job in the music business and what led you to that job?

I studied at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and, in 1977, I took a job at a record store in town. The guy who owned the store was also a partner in a promotion company in Milwaukee called Daydream Productions. They had a guy who was a runner, which means you go backstage and set up the deli trays and you drive off to get whatever anybody needs. I had been at the store for about three days and was standing around, trying to learn the record business, when the runner for Sha Na Na's promoter had his car break down. So they said to me: "Do you want to be a runner tonight? You don't know the record business yet, and it would really help us out." I said, "Oh yeah, absolutely. I'll do that." So I hopped in my car, took care of Sha Na Na's people, drove a couple of the guys to the hotel and back to the show, and set up all the deli trays and all that kind of stuff.

The next day, I was talking to the guy who owned the record store and he said, "You didn't seem too starstruck back there." I said, "I like that side of the business." He said, "OK, you keep doing it." But eventually, the record store needed me more than the promoters did and I got bumped out of the promoter side of it. So I went to someone else who was doing concerts and learned a little bit about the box office, and I learned how to set up backstage things and gradually learned the business.

One day, I got a call from the guy who was booking bands at Summerfest. He said, "We're all leaving here to start ChicagoFest. They don't have an entertainment guy here now because we're all leaving and the festival is in a couple of months. Do you want to do it?" I said, "Sure."

I interviewed with the CEO and he put a contract in front of me and said, "You've got 'til tomorrow to sign this or I'll find someone else." So I signed it, and I've been the entertainment director ever since. I've seen a lot of bands come and go. I've seen the Bon Jovis and the R.E.M.s of the world unloading their own gear out of their vans back in the early days.

What is an early lesson you learned?

Some early lessons for me were integrity and honesty. I learned a long time ago that your word is the most important thing in the concert business. If you say you're going to do a show, then you do it on a verbal handshake. That's your word; the show is happening. The reputable agents out there and the reputable managers—that's what they do. There's no asking for more money down the line. Your word is your word; you don't cheat anybody and you try to be as open and transparent as possible in every deal that you do.

How has your job changed from when you started?

When you put an offer in for a show when I started, you used a telex or you sent a telegram with an offer in it. Now, you email an offer to someone and, *boom*, it's done. Back in those days, you got contracts in a pouch in the mail.

There were no cellphones and there were 10 or 11 stages on the grounds [at Summerfest]. No one could get ahold of you—you just went from stage to stage until somebody said, "They're looking for you," and then you'd find out who that was.

The world's changed dramatically—everything is quicker; everything is *now*. We have a lot more bands working in the summer now—you have a lot more venues; there's a lot of people working in the concert business. There was an economic slump 10 years ago, but I think it's come back and people are happy about going to shows. I do think that tickets have gotten out of hand pricewise for big shows. I never thought we'd see the kind of numbers we see now, but people are willing to pay them.

What's your best day like and what's your most stressful day like?

My best day is usually late in the festival—the second or third to last day—because, by that time, all the loose ends from the rest of the run have been put to bed. There's hopefully a sold-out show in the amphitheater and the weather is perfect—the sun is shining and everybody is pouring into the gates. Everybody is happy and we're going to have a six-figure day.

The worst days are usually early on in the festival, when you know you've got a long run to go and very little sleep coming up. It may be a cloudy day—a rainy day where you know business is going to be bad. No matter what happens at the festival, no matter who's playing there, a lot of it is dependent on the weather. At a festival like Summerfest, you survive on the ancillaries. We have a very inexpensive ticket. It's $20 to get into the grounds. You're getting a lot of advance sales for the amphitheater shows, of course, but not so much for the grounds. So if you have a bad weather day, it's the difference between having 50,000 people and 100,000 people in a single day. You're always watching the weather, and the tough ones to get through are when it's drizzling and you look at all the maps coming in and see it's going to be like that all day long.

Michael Franti

Spearhead team up with a pair of hit-making producers for another set of electro-charged, conscious bangers. BY MIKE GREENHAUS

ACOUSTIC FOUNDATIONS

We were on tour while we were working on *Soulrocker*, so we'd be in the studio for a week and then we'd be out for a month—then in for two weeks and out for three months. Along the way, I met two producers who helped shape the record. We were on the road with SOJA, and their producer, Supa Dups, showed up and said, "I love your show and your music. My wife and kids love your stuff. It'd be great to make some songs." I sent him some basic tracks for "Once a Day" and was blown away by what he sent back. So we set up at Circle House Studios in Miami and I reached out to Di Genius, who is the son of reggae legend Freddie McGregor. When I first heard the name Di Genius, my first thought was: "Who has the balls to call themself that?" But, holy shit, he is a prodigy—he was producing albums when he was 13. For a while, I was working with Di Genius in one studio and with Supa Dups in another room on another day.

Eventually, we all just moved into the same studio and started working together. Jay Bowman, my guitar player, was there and added some guitar parts. Carl Young, Spearhead's bass player, is always hovering around, working on tracks back in my studio in San Francisco. But it was basically the four of us making the record in Miami, and all of us said it was the most fun we've ever had recording.

THE ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC *BRAVEHEART*

These songs all started from the foundation of an acoustic guitar. I'd work up some chords and those guys would start playing around them. I've used electronic sounds and instrumentation on records going back to Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy. Along the way, I fell in love with the acoustic guitar. We wanted to merge those two things this time around. When I'm at home, I listen to every kind of music. It all enters its way into my writing vocabulary. These guys work 90 percent in the electronic realm, so that side of things really came out. I've produced my own records before, and it's so much to get your head around. I'm always amazed when somebody writes, stars and directs a movie—like Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*. This time, I had somebody else making a beat while I was sitting in a corner working on melodies, chords and lyrics, and then, we bounced those ideas off each other.

DEFINITIVE EMOTIONS

There's this nervousness built up when you play a song live for the first time—like making a speech in front of people that you haven't memorized yet. There's also this excitement—I *have* to do this now. It helps you find out more about the song. Is it too fast? Are there too many instruments? For example, we did a version of the *Soulrocker* song "I Got Love for You" on *All Rebel Rockers*, but we never played that version live. I wrote it for my son when he was leaving home after high school, going cross-country by Greyhound. When I got out on tour, I found out that the song was much more intimate and emotional for me. I was playing around with it and Supa Dups was like, "What's that guitar riff? Let me put a beat to it." My first thought was, "That's a song I already did," but he said, "I don't care. We've got to record that shit right *now*." So we came up with a more definitive version of the emotion that I wrote the song from. That's something I only found after playing the song live for many years.

POPULIST POP MUSIC

I didn't get into music because I wanted to get rich and retire. I got into it because I hoped, one day, I'd be like John Lee Hooker—playing a show when I'm 80 years old and still loving it as much as I did when I was 20. Every song I write, I always think, "How can I reach the most people possible with the message that I have?" "Say Hey (I Love You)," "Sound of Sunshine" and "I'm Alive" [off 2008's *All Rebel Rockers*, 2010's *The Sound of Sunshine* and 2013's *All People*, respectively] all sold well and reached a lot of people. But when I wrote them, my thought was, "Is this the most effective means of communicating the message that I have?" Not, "Will this song get played on the radio?" Putting your beliefs out there and letting other people hear those beliefs and share them—that's the key to longevity.

CHALLENGING TIMES

It's an election year and it seems like there's more riding on the presidential election than ever. But, that's what I said in the previous five elections, too. Maybe, as the world goes on, the issues become more universal. We have all these long primaries, and I'm waiting for somebody to just drop a Beyoncé—a week before, one of the candidates goes: "I'm in. Vote for me." I want to make music that inspires people to make a difference—the things that we see happening today with climate change, the increasing divide between rich and poor, the misunderstanding and hatred that is playing out between religious and racial groups, police and community violence. I want to make music that helps people to get through challenging times so that they can help the world be a better place. It's as simple as that.

THOUGHTS ON 50

I turned 50 in April. Rock-and-roll keeps you young, but age happens. You feel like you're 20, then you wake up and you're 40. My wife and I have a family motto: "Be your best, serve the greater good and rock out wherever you are." What that means to me is: Always find some way to grow, take the talent you have and give it back to other people on this planet and never lose that enthusiasm that you had when you went to your first rock concert. That's the thing that keeps you young. I did this solar-energy benefit in San Francisco with Sammy Hagar and Bob Weir. The way we were all hanging out backstage, you'd think we were all 25-year-old kids. Music helps me keep that enthusiasm, and I cherish it for that reason.

The Accidental Archivist

Donna Jean Godchaux unboxes a lost gem from the Jerry Garcia Band's classic days BY DEAN BUDNICK

GARCIALIVE *Volume Seven* presents a heretofore unreleased and uncirculated Jerry Garcia Band performance. The show took place on Nov. 8, 1976 at Sophie's in Palo Alto, Calif.—the venue was later renamed the Keystone Palo Alto—and keyboardist Keith Godchaux, vocalist Donna Jean Godchaux, bassist John Kahn and drummer Ron Tutt all joined Garcia that night.

The source of the tapes, originally recorded by longtime Dead family recording engineer Betty Cantor-Jackson, was Donna Jean herself, who discovered the reels during a recent move. She has no recollection of that particular performance but warm feelings about the era in general.

It's been nearly 40 years since this performance took place. How did you come across these tapes?

A few years ago, some Grateful Dead tapes were discovered in I guess what you might call the basement of the Godchauxes' family houseboat. Nobody knew those tapes were down there. After all these years, those tapes were found, released and called the "Houseboat Tapes." [Those reels, from the Aug. 7, 1971 show at Golden Hall in San Diego, were released in 2005 as *Dick's Picks 35*].

But, in this case, I found them about a year ago during a move. I didn't realize that one of these boxes contained all of these Jerry Garcia Band tapes, and I went, "OK, here we go again..." It's not like we were hoarding the tapes, waiting for some kind of special date to acknowledge that we had them—they were just randomly found in a box that hadn't been opened.

So it was a nice surprise and we immediately let Mountain Girl know. She was the first one that I called about tapes. It's great, since so much time has passed, to find something that people have never heard before. It is our good pleasure to have had custody of these tapes, albeit unknowingly, and to see something come of them. I'm very happy about that.

Do you have any guess as to how they ended up in that box?

I'm sure that the Grateful Dead tapes that were discovered were tapes that Jerry gave to Keith to learn Grateful Dead music. As far as these tapes are concerned, I couldn't tell you, in a million years, how we ended up with them, but we did. Somehow they ended up in a box in my house, 39 years later, and they're still usable. It was a nice surprise.

What are your memories, not of that show, but of that lineup?

It was very different from the Grateful Dead in that everything was so scaled back to where we could play theaters instead of hockey rinks. It was very enjoyable on that level because these places were built for music to be played in. It was just a really unique situation to be as popular as Jerry Garcia was and still be able to be in a band that could do what we did in a smaller setting than the Grateful Dead.

It was kind of like a home away from home for Jerry, in that he got this different expression of what he was feeling musically than the Grateful Dead. It was one drummer and it was a very scaled-back musical performance as well. Ron Tutt was the perfect drummer for what Garcia wanted to accomplish.

One of the differences was that a signature of the Garcia Band was all of the gospel music we did. When Keith and I and Mountain Girl and Garcia lived in Stinson Beach [Calif.], Jerry would come over, we would have tons of LPs—the old gospel spirituals—and we would sit and listen to those day after day and then pick songs for the Garcia Band. So that kind of separated it on a certain level from music that was chosen for the Grateful Dead. We just had a blast going through all of that music—like The Golden Gate Quartet. That was a real departure from what was generally played in the Grateful Dead.

Can you compare and contrast your role as a vocalist in the Jerry Garcia Band with the Grateful Dead?

It was much easier to hear with the Jerry Garcia Band because, with the Grateful Dead, you have two drummers. With the Dead, you had this huge sound system that you had to compete with vocally, which is very hard to do. The scaled-back orchestration made it easier for me.

You were a session singer before you joined the Grateful Dead, can you talk about that transition?

It was a tremendous transition because all I had ever known was all of the years doing studio work, and everything was very orchestrated and arranged. I had never been onstage before, and the first time that I was ever in public onstage was at Winterland with the Grateful

Continued on page 77

Shawn Colvin and Steve Earle

Colvin & Earle BY DEAN BUDNICK

"THIS RECORD CAME ABOUT because I had the idea that Steve and I should do some dates together," Shawn Colvin explains of their new collaborative album, *Colvin & Earle*. "I'd done a stint with Mary Chapin Carpenter where we spent the evening onstage together—trading songs, singing on each other's songs as a duo—and I adored it. It was camaraderie. I got entertained; I got to be a backup musician. I didn't have to be alone. I don't mind doing my solo stuff; I think I'm good at it and it's what I do. But that was really fun and I thought, 'Who else can I do this with?' Steve and I had never really worked together. We'd met and we knew one another—we sat in with each other a couple of times—but he's a person I thought of often, and he said he'd be up for doing it. He calls it 'white-washing the fence' [a *Tom Sawyer* reference] because my motive was doing half the work."

"The very first show we did together, we didn't really even rehearse except for at soundcheck that day," Steve Earle adds. "We had two chairs onstage, and one of us would sing and one of us would sit down, and we'd trade songs for about half the show. From that point on, it was both of us playing—even if we both weren't singing. The surprising thing though—the real epiphany—was how well we sang together. The very first thing we ever sang together in front of people was 'Wake Up Little Susie.' Right at that point, we realized there's something that happens when we sing together that we both found exciting. That's when I began saying, 'We need to make a record.'"

With that charge, Colvin and Earle started working on *Colvin & Earle* in multiple locations, enlisting Buddy Miller to produce and accompany them on baritone guitar. They also hired a top-notch band featuring guitarist Richard Bennett (Neil Diamond, Mark Knopfler), drummer Fred Eltringham (Sheryl Crow, The Wallflowers) and bassist Chris Wood (Medeski Martin & Wood, The Wood Brothers) for the sessions.

COME WHAT MAY

SHAWN COLVIN: When Steve suggested we make this record, he felt it would be important that we write songs together, which obviously was the thing to do. We got together three separate times. The first time was in Nashville. We were on a little break during our tour, and we spent a couple of days in my hotel room working on stuff, and "Come What May" was the first song we wrote. He came in with a musical idea, and we both just started scribbling down lyrics. I would go off into the bedroom of the hotel and sleep and start scribbling lyrics and then, come back in and give them to him. It came about pretty fast. So that was the first thing we wrote with the idea that this was a song that two people would sing together.

TELL MOSES

STEVE EARLE: That same day that we finished "Come What May," we started "Tell Moses." It started with a mandolin riff that had been sitting around—I'd even played it with my band some, and I thought it was part of this "country record" that I've been writing, which will definitely be my next solo record. The melody that I was playing comes from the mandolin riff—and you can hear it opening the track—and it just dawned on me that this is good for harmony, and so we started working on it that day.

"Tell Moses" sounded like a spiritual number when we sang it together. So we went to the Exodus story. At first, we thought it was going to be a modern-day "Abraham, Martin and John" [the 1968 Dick Holler song first recorded by Dion]. Then, we struck on *Selma*. The movie had been out, I'd been thinking about it, reading about it. I had friends who went on the anniversary to march across the bridge and I was invited but couldn't go. So that was there, and we started working on that. Shawn wrote most of that verse, the Martin verse. Originally, I think we thought that the last verse would be about Nelson Mandela, but at some point, I think it was me who stumbled into "Ferguson, Missouri." Those other movements had leaders, but maybe this movement lacks a leader simply because, at some point, what matters is what we do individually in our everyday lives.

TOBACCO ROAD

SC: I came in with "Tobacco Road." I have a weakness for '60s on 6 on SiriusXM, and they would play The Nashville Teens' version of "Tobacco Road." I loved it—always have—and it reminded me of Steve. Once this whole thing was in the workshop, I thought that this is something that I love and is a great duo song, so I brought it in and we tried it and it worked out.

SE: That's Jimmy Page's guitar riff on the version that everybody knows. It was from the second or third session that Page got as a sub for Big Jim Sullivan. The first one was "Downtown" and the second or third one was "Tobacco Road." I was a little intimidated by that guitar riff because we always planned on touring this record with just the two of us without a band because that's the way we'd done it before. But then I figured out that I didn't necessarily have to play it on guitar. So, on the record, what you hear is me playing it on an octave mandolin and then Richard Bennett playing it on the guitar.

RUBY TUESDAY

SC: That was Steve's pick. Who doesn't know "Ruby Tuesday?" Who would not want to try it? So we did, and even though that's not traditionally a duet or a duo song, our edict for this record is that we would sing everything together. We took "Ruby Tuesday" and folked it up a little bit: and I think it stands up well.

When songwriters choose to cover someone else's song, it's pretty important to bring something a little bit new to it, not better. I think hearing the song in a different way is hopefully something that works and is an important component of us covering a song that everybody knows so well.

SE: We talked about doing it when we were touring, but we never learned it, so we learned it for the record. We're really proud of that one. And I get to be Mick *and* Keith, how cool is that? I sing the melody on the verses and Keith's part on the choruses. Shawn and I naturally switch parts anyway—it's just one of the things that happens when we sing, so nobody's got the melody for the whole song on any of this stuff.

THE WAY THAT WE DO

SC: I brought in "The Way That We Do"—the guitar parts, the music—and I thought it was along the lines of my Joni Mitchell predilections. I was

hoping Steve would like it and he did, so he was into working on it. I had the title and Steve said, "Let's use phrases that are sort of common rather than telling a specific story." So "fly on the wall," "ghost in the hall"—things like that. That's where the form of it sprang from—again, it's a good song for a couple to sing together and sing to each other.

SE: We wrote "The Way That We Do" together in my New York City apartment. There were three writing sessions: one in Nashville in the middle of a tour, one where I flew to Austin, and "The Way That We Do" is the last one. And it's the only one where you hear our voices separately on the record. I think there's a lot of Fred Neil's ghost in that; although I don't think I've talked to Shawn about it. I can look out the window of my apartment and there's the corner of Bleecker and MacDougal where Fred Neil's standing on the cover of that album [1965's *Bleecker & MacDougal*]. The way the song turned out reminds me of "Dolphins" or one of those moody Fred Neil songs. I definitely was leaning on that vocally because, in singing that together, I'm as low as I get and she's as high as she gets and it's kind of weird.

HAPPY AND FREE

SE: There's actually a fourth place the songs were written, and that was over the Internet. I was in the back of a bus and she was flying, but I just sent her a mandolin riff. I put it down on my phone and sent it to her. I had the title and we started trading verses back and forth by text and email. The whole thing was written that way.

There's a fine line between narcissism and being able to communicate with an audience. What allows you to not cross that line is empathy. This job is not so much about telling people how you feel as it is talking about the things that you feel other people give a fuck about. Our audiences are smart. They'll call bullshit on us. What they care about it is that there's a common experience. So "Happy and Free," that's what everybody wants, right?

SC: It's the feel-good song of the record.

YOU WERE ON MY MIND

SC: Steve brought that in, and as I've said, I'm often glued to the '60s on 6 channel, and the We Five's "You Were on My Mind" is on a lot. Steve brought it in and didn't really know that version but we gave it a try. It's a good example of the way our voices click and blend. I also have to say, the band we had on this record and having Buddy Miller as the producer couldn't have been more perfect. When I listen to "You Were on My Mind," I just love the band—I just love the dynamic, the way they work with it. It was a total pleasure to do that one.

SE: "You Were on My Mind" is weird. I learned from a Canadian journalist that it was written about two blocks from my apartment by Sylvia Fricker in what was then called the Hotel Earle. I thought it was an Ian Tyson song. I knew the original was Ian & Sylvia. Crispian St. Peters recorded it—a lot of people did.

The chord structure was my idea. We talked about it for the tour and never learned it, so we pretty much learned it in the studio. It was the hardest thing we worked on for any of the tracks. For one thing, we didn't know it and we didn't write it. It's the We Five chord structure that was the big hit. We used that chord structure, which is way more complicated than the original. I insisted on using Sylvia's original lyric, which had been cleaned up quite a bit for AM radio at the time—"I got drunk and I got sick" and all that stuff from the second verse, we put all that stuff back in.

YOU'RE RIGHT (I'M WRONG)

SC: We needed something dark. We both tend toward the dark, but we needed something darker. So Steve said he had these B minor chord changes and we started on something. I can't remember how it transpired chronologically, but it's a pretty even split—a lyrical co-write and a musical co-write. It's the rock song of the record. It's also the toughest song of the record and the darkest song of the record so, of course, I love it.

RAISE THE DEAD

SC: "Raise the Dead" is an Emmylou Harris song. She's an underappreciated songwriter and writes some amazing stuff. I always loved "Raise the Dead" and I thought it could be a good duo song because of the repeat phrase at the end of each verse: "I'll never get out of your love alive." It's just brilliant. Going through Hank Williams, Sam Cooke, Bill Monroe and Robert Johnson, and tying it into this little surprise tagline, which is: "I'm just never going to get out of this relationship alive."

YOU'RE STILL GONE

SC: Oh, "You're Still Gone" was one of the early ones we wrote, and the germ of that came from Julie Miller. She gave it to me—the first two verses—two years ago or so. I had written two more verses and I knew it needed something else, so I brought it to Steve and he wrote the choruses, so it's a triad co-write. It's pretty much split three ways evenly, and the real heartbreaker of the record, so we closed the record with it.

SE: "You're Still Gone" was finished in Austin at Shawn's house. After we finished "Tell Moses," she said, "I have this piece of a song that Julie Miller and I started." Julie gave her a classic Julie Miller melody—she's one of the best songwriters I know. So I've got my name on several songs with Shawn Colvin and one with Shawn Colvin and Julie Miller out of the deal. I was pretty proud of that. We finished it that day in the room.

Ryan Adams

The singer-songwriter revisits the roundabout road from Whiskeytown to his landmark album *Heartbreaker*—and from Oasis to the Grateful Dead

BY MIKE GREENHAUS

RYAN ADAMS' *HEARTBREAKER* IS OFTEN hailed as one of the greatest solo debuts of the new millennium—a statement of purpose that introduced the North Carolina-bred singer-songwriter and his punky mix of folk, country and acoustic rock to the burgeoning hipster underground. But as critics and fans should have expected from a roots album that kicks off with a studio argument with David Rawlings about Morrissey, Adams can never be pigeonholed, even by his own recordings. Since releasing *Heartbreaker* in 2000, he has followed his muse past alt-country and into ragged rock-and-roll, Willie Nelson-approved country, power pop, black metal, manicured folky pop and even loving Taylor Swift covers—as well as an extended detour into cosmic psychedelic-Americana with his most collaborative backing band, The Cardinals.

"When I made *Heartbreaker*, I had just become of legal drinking age, which, if you ask anyone who knows me or knew me at the time, didn't prevent me from partying before then—being a wild teenager playing metal and playing drums in punk-rock bands and having fun playing a lot of Sonic Youth-sounding music," Adams says during a break from recording at his Los Angeles studio, where he is currently putting the final touches on a new album. "In the past, I didn't know how to separate that this is my job. Although my whole heart is still in what I do because I love what I do, back then, I didn't know that I could close the door at the end of the day. Now, I can shut down the shop, go home and watch *Hill Street Blues* and know the difference."

Given his restless nature, Adams delivered perhaps his biggest surprise when he decided to revisit *Heartbreaker*, an album he's described as a "mask" or "spiritual cold," on his own PAX-AM label through Caroline Records and Universal Music. In addition to remastered tracks culled from Adams' original tapes, the reissue also boasts demos, outtakes and a live DVD featuring his initial stab at Oasis' "Wonderwall." (Which was, in retrospect, perhaps the first hint that Adams' record collection is far more wide-ranging than Gram Parsons albums.)

"Honestly, my part in it was remembering sessions or masters that had otherwise been forgotten because a lot of stuff went on around the making of this record, and this record was made several times in different kinds of ways," Adams says of *Heartbreaker*, which was recorded in the wake of his seminal alt-country band Whiskeytown's split. "It's an interesting concept to go: 'What the hell was I really doing after Whiskeytown?'"

You've never been particularly nostalgic when it comes to your music. Was there a reason you revisited *Heartbreaker* at this juncture of your career?

Heartbreaker was originally in a licensing deal with Bloodshot. Someone else was supposed to put it out, but I protested and said I really, definitely wanted it to come out on Bloodshot. My manager at the time was surprised by that. It was mainly because I really liked the people at Bloodshot—I liked what they had done and felt we had a kinship. Eventually, the licensing deal ran out and now I have my own label. It just made sense that we would do something special with it.

I had a pretty in-depth and long tour—and a lot of life madness—around *Heartbreaker*'s 15th anniversary in September, so it didn't come out then. But this also took my day-to-day manager over a year and a half to bring together. That final Whiskeytown record didn't have a tour because Geffen, my label, was dissolved into the Seagram's deal. I didn't really know how to get out of my contract, so there was some negotiating and some madness and some loss of songs. I had moved back to Jacksonville, N.C., where I was born, from New York.

There were a lot of changes involved in that process along the way. This was before I had a computer—I basically left a trail of recordings in my wake that, separately and together, my manager and I went looking for. Along the way, we unearthed a bunch of stuff that I don't think either of us could have imagined we would have found.

It sounds like it was something of a scavenger hunt to remember what was going on during that time period and piece it back together. Listening back to those sessions, what struck you?

Well, those were different days for me, so it was a different process. People forget that I was just a teenager in Whiskeytown, and Whiskeytown really was a step away from the band I was in before, which really started as a combination of the things I was into, like The Feelies and Sonic Youth and the Yo La Tengo *Fakebook* record. I started Whiskeytown a year or two after my grandpa died. I left my hometown—that was a really huge part of who I was. Although I hadn't had an affinity for [roots] music before, only a nostalgic feeling for it, it came back to me because that was the first music I was exposed to.

It's like anyone who loses a parental figure, whether they are your actual biological parent or someone that raised you. You lose someone and then you instantly become drawn toward the things that made them who they were. For me, it was listening to country music and bluegrass music and, eventually, from there I went down the Bob Dylan folk-album canon. It reminded me of my grandfather—I had gone down that road as a child as well. Then I discovered Sleepy John Estes and Big Bill Broonzy and I followed that path.

Whiskeytown became a detour because, although I really wanted to be in a band, I used to sit and say, "I want to start a band that's like the Cowboy Junkies and X and American Music Club all in one." People in the band used to say, "But I thought you wanted to be like a Gram Parsons?," and I'd go, "Well, we're living in Raleigh, N.C., so the chances of playing it extraordinarily redneck and Southern just happened." Even Corrosion of Conformity's *Eye for an Eye*, that amazing hardcore album, still has some strange Southern wilt to it.

By the time the Whiskeytown dream started taking off, I realized that we didn't have the technical ability to play that kind of music very well.

We could write it and record it and hit the mark sometimes, but I had that proclivity to pick up the electric guitar because I was trying to change back into myself—who I was before that band. By the middle of all that, Whiskeytown was trying to maintain an identity that was separate from what I really was. That's what happens when you get involved in an art project.

You've described *Heartbreaker* as a musical costume of sorts. Can you elaborate on that statement?

Although Whiskeytown was well meaning, it really did take a huge chunk of time and patience and learning and being steadfast to do it. The thing is, the dream imploded—and the band that I was in didn't really cover the music that I totally loved to play. I moved to New York and my label went under, and my relationship went under right before I moved.

It was tremendously confusing and upsetting and debilitating. There was no one to play music with to express that. So, inevitably for me as a songwriter, I was looking to play guitar stuff that didn't make me feel so damn lonely and that turned into music that sounded complete on an acoustic guitar. Whether it be a folk-sounding song or something that sounded more like a lament, I just got caught in that place.

It's like having a spiritual cold—that's not who you are, but it happened. I wanted it to pass so I could get out the door, spiritually speaking, and go skateboarding again and get out in the sun. That's what I mean when I say it's a bit of a mask. I was really trying to describe my pain in a dramatic way that did it justice, but I didn't feel like I quite had the tools. Maybe that's partly why people enjoy *Heartbreaker*—there's a naiveté there, like when you see a child trying to describe outer space. It'd be like watching me try to solder the connectors back on an electromechanical pinball machine. I can do it, but it's going to be messy.

Though this album was recorded with that sense of singularity and loneliness, some familiar voices did contribute to the record, including Emmylou Harris, David Rawlings, Gillian Welch and Pat Sansone, who would go on to join Wilco.

That brings up a beautifully annoying thing. I didn't really know what song publishing was in those days. I didn't know what it meant to give up a half a song. I didn't really collaborate with anyone on *Heartbreaker*. I wrote "To Be Young" a year before it was recorded and had already toured, playing that song solo in England. Dave and Gill came to the studio one day for four or five hours. They might have come again another day for a minute just to check in and say hi—we were friends back then and it was cool to hang with them, but really the whole record was just me and Ethan Johns. He played drums, I played acoustic and sang, and we played live. Ethan would typically play bass, and I would put an electric guitar down if it was needed but, often, we

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Back in the Driver's Seat

On their first album since parting ways with a key member, Kung Fu show off some new funky moves.

BY MATT INMAN

"CHANGE IS EXCITING, challenging and a constant part of life. It is the process of evolution and growth. We do our best to embrace change in our lives and the music we play." With these words posted to their Facebook page late in May 2015, Kung Fu announced the departure of their founding keyboardist—and one of their most visible members—and welcomed a new musician into their ranks. Todd Stoops was out. Beau Sasser was in—and the news hit the band's fan base hard.

Seemingly split into two camps, Kung Fu's fans either balked at the band's firing of a musician with the talent and presence of Stoops and the way in which it was carried out—via email—or respectfully wished Stoops the best and expressed their excitement at what was to come for the Connecticut-based funk quintet. As the squabbling played out over the Internet, the guys couldn't help but notice.

"We see everything," says saxophonist Rob Somerville, lounging on a greenroom couch at New York's Brooklyn Bowl. The band is hanging out together backstage a few hours from show time, before the first of two packed, high-energy shows that will help set up the release of their first album without Stoops, *Joyride*.

"We saw. It wasn't easy," adds drummer Adrian Tramontano from the other end of the couch. "It's like a divorce—everybody thinks they know everything about it. But that's the way it is in the music business when you have a breakup or a member leaves—everybody likes to think they know best or what they're talking about, but it's honestly nobody's business what really happened. There was a good reason—that's all it is."

It's a mark of the modern music world that many—if not the majority of—bands have most of their interactions with fans through social media, especially in the jam scene in which Kung Fu reside. "The dynamic of Facebook and social media is interesting because if you put out some negativity, it snowballs," says guitarist Tim Palmieri. "It just amplifies. You start with this negativity, and it just gets out of hand. It's just like, 'What scene are we in? Isn't this the sunshine daydream scene?' It just allows the trolls out there to really start cutting their teeth and exercising their nastiness behind a computer keyboard. So that's unfortunate."

There really wasn't much time to dwell on outside perceptions, though—less than two weeks after their announcement, Kung Fu played their first show with their new lineup at Disc Jam in Upstate New York State. "It's not that you block it out," says Somerville. "It's just that, you know, you fuckin' move on. You get back to work and you do it the best you can."

"All the negative responses are online and in this cyber, fake world," Tramontano interjects. "Everything at the shows is positive. So, you can hate us on the Internet."

"We were just getting back to a healthy, happy work environment," continues Somerville. "Staying committed to that concept of being true to ourselves and just being productive and making music—we're in the business of making music, not drama. There's no rewards for drama in music, and that's the route we're gonna take."

Surprisingly, it seems Sasser was untouched by the whole ordeal, deciding instead to put his head down and focus on the music—which was, in reality, all he had time to do, as there was an entire catalog of songs he needed to get under his fingers. "I will say that how the whole situation blew up was a little bit surprising to me," he says. "I think any of the negativity that was involved didn't really affect the playing or keeping my head straight. I had my nose to the grindstone as far as the material was concerned. I learned it in a very quick fashion and we went out there and started playing."

FOR THOSE WHO KNEW OR had even just met Sasser, the fact that he dealt with the transition in such a way wasn't surprising. He is, by all accounts, an even-keeled professional. "You gotta know the type of person Beau *is*," say bassist Chris DeAngelis. "He just came in and it was immediately good vibes; everything's great."

"That probably would've scared the shit out of me," says Tramontano. "The whole situation didn't even phase this guy."

The entire band agrees that the new lineup's Disc Jam performance was a success. As DeAngelis puts it: "When [Beau] took that first solo, man, I knew it was gonna be OK." Sasser echoes the sentiment, saying, "I thought it came together pretty darn smoothly, to be honest with you. Even the first couple rehearsals we had—I think we could all tell it was going to be totally fine."

The day after that festival outing, the group jumped onto a plane and flew out to Colorado to play two more sets in Denver, before Sasser got on a flight right back to Disc Jam to play a Sunday set with his other outfit, Beau Sasser's Escape Plan. And that was just the beginning of a tight schedule for the keyboardist.

"That was my whole summer because I already had a schedule booked when these guys hit me up," says Sasser. "I had to fit a square peg into this circle hole all summer. That was the biggest growing pain, keeping the energy up and finding time to work on the tunes—because they are certainly challenging. Last summer was a bear."

Sasser made it through, however, and has now been with Kung Fu for over a year. The new quintet has an album under their belt, *Joyride*, which dropped this past March and has Kung Fu back in the business of making their own brand of punchy funk fusion. Far from slowing down to accommodate a new member, the group became even more productive and now see themselves as a better version of Kung Fu—happier, healthier and more together than ever.

"The biggest change is just the amount of material that we've come up with," says Somerville. "You know, for a year prior to Beau joining the band, I don't think we wrote a single tune. Now, here we are a year later with a new album. The personalities in the band just jive—we're getting along; we're having fun. We're working. I think the creative process comes back to life when everybody's in it to win it."

The newfound energy wasn't limited to new material, either. Two songs on *Joyride*, opening track "Daddy D" and "Speed Bump of Your Love," had been bouncing around in Somerville's head for years before this renewed state of creativity in the band spurred their completion. The lyrics for "Daddy D" (which contains a throwback cameo from original Kung Fu bassist David Livolsi on background vocals) came out of an experience involving him, DeAngelis and a broken-down cargo van—just one example among many of the band's strengthened bond.

"We all personally moved on immediately and just started practicing, writing new ideas and new songs," says DeAngelis. "It was just *bam*, *bam, bam* on the road, and we're brothers already."

The camaraderie between the band members is palpable in the greenroom, and while they recognize the importance of what came before, they are most visibly excited to talk about the present and the bright future of the group. "Music should be

a joyful process," says Palmieri. "Granted, there is some merit to friendly competition or that kind of vibe—even tension can breed some good art—but I think, long-term, it's not healthy. It should still be coming from a joyful place, and that's where it's coming from now."

"Having a healthy relationship manifests itself in so many ways," say Somerville. "For me, at the age I'm at, I don't have time for anything else. It's refreshing, to say the least, to be able to be with a group of guys that respect each other in life and on the road—but, most particularly, on the stage. There's a great amount of listening going on onstage that had never really occurred before in this band—and very few bands that I've ever been in. The amount of listening to each other and caring about what the other musicians are playing is paramount to me. That's really shown itself in our live performances, as well as the record. I can't emphasize how proud I am of everybody getting through the past year enough, but also the way that everybody is listening musically—it's just top-tier stuff right now, for me."

IN MANY WAYS, KUNG FU is a second marriage; all of the original members have been staples of the Northeast jamband circuit since the late '90s. Palmieri and Tramontano first made their marks as members of the Jammy-winning act The Breakfast; founding saxophonist Kris Jensen had backed Allman Brothers Band luminaries Dickey Betts and Jaimoe; and Livolsi, whom Chris DeAngelis replaced, was a veteran of Jazz Is Dead and John Scofield's various projects. Shortly after Kung Fu formed, Jensen left the group, and Somerville, a longtime member of fellow Connecticut funk heroes Deep Banana Blackout, joined Kung Fu and solidified the lineup.

Kung Fu were more than the sum of their parts from the start, representing a true band with an individual identity. Four years after their formation, the members of Kung Fu feel like they're only just sinking their teeth into the jamming and improvisational possibilities of the band. They credit much of that to the addition of Sasser, whose résumé includes Boston jamband Uncle Sammy, the funky Alan Evans Trio and the Zappa tribute project Z3, which also counts Palmieri as a member. "He brings a wealth of funk and jazz history to the table, which we appreciate," says Palmieri. "It's more open now. We can leave the script and enter some new areas and then come back to the script, whereas we were a little more calculated before. Even though it's still tight-knit—we're not going on 20-minute jams here—within our structure, there's more freedom."

That structure, it turns out, allows for a wide range of genres that Kung Fu tap into from song to song. Besides their usual wheelhouse of fusion and progressive funk, *Joyride* takes the band's sound everywhere from the poppy, driving chorus of the title track to the murky jazz depths of the middle interlude of "Vroom." And the varying types of songs translate onstage in the dizzying and engaging live shows on which Kung Fu have based their career.

"It's funny—sometimes I'm sitting up there and thinking how the audience goes through this journey during the show," says Sasser. "The Earth, Wind & Fire type of funk, and then the more fusion-type stuff, like Mahavishnu Orchestra or a Return to Forever thing. And then, we do 'Samurai' sometimes toward the end of the show, and that's like a big EDM-type jam."

"And then we play the blues!" adds Somerville.

"It's a hell of a diverse show when all is said and done," Sasser continues. "I think we hit all the points, and adding more of a jamming aspect into it has been fun for me—something that I haven't done in years, and something I grew up listening to and enjoying."

Tramontano—who, just minutes before, showed his own talent range by jamming on Sasser's organ when the keyboardist was running late to soundcheck—says that Kung Fu's shows are more unique now, differing from night to night, which not only makes it easier for fans to keep coming back for more, but also contributes to a widening fan base. "It means you get a diverse crowd, from teens to senior citizens—I'm serious," says Somerville. "You see people of all ages. When you're at a show, we're all together."

In fact, Kung Fu can summarize their diverse crowd through two recent experiences: First, during their recent trip to Florida's Wanee Festival, the band experienced probably their biggest audience thus far, and one that Tramontano says was a bit older than what they usually draw. "Like an Allman Brothers/Grateful Dead crowd—not used to seeing this band," he says. "Which was totally different, but it was awesome."

Right after returning to the Northeast from Wanee, Kung Fu hosted a Bernie Sanders benefit in Brooklyn with Phish drummer and avid Sanders supporter Jon Fishman and Allman Brothers/Dead & Company bassist Oteil Burbridge, among others. It was a 180-degree about-face in terms of crowd demographic, but Kung Fu don't put age restrictions on who can enjoy their music.

"You can see a 75-year-old guy with a Frank Zappa T-shirt and an 18-year-old dude with a Snarky Puppy T-shirt, both standing next to each other in the front of the show," says Sasser.

"That's a good feeling," adds Somerville. "We're very lucky to be able to appeal to that diverse of a crowd." At 46, having seven years on the next oldest member of the band, the saxophonist appreciates the range in their fans' ages, but he's also the first to say that age is just a number—and none of these guys are planning on slowing down this joyride anytime soon. As Somerville sings in the chorus of "Speed Bump of Your Love," "I'm gettin' old/ But not over the hill."

"Here I am—here *we* are—still doin' it, and never even questioning what I've spent my lifetime doing," says Somerville. "I still feel like a kid. I still feel like I can kick some 23 year old's ass on the road."

And there's no question as to where he derives that sprightly disposition from. "The energy comes from us playing together," he continues. "Whether we're playing in front of a crowd or whether we're playing in the studio, I think the energy is there no matter where we are—as long as we're playing together. It's always progressive, always forward. I like that we haven't taken a minute to just sit back and enjoy. We're constantly thinking ahead, and that's a good place to be."

After years of 'getting down' with Soulive and Lettuce, Eric Krasno steps out under his own name—and with his own voice.

BY ALAN PAUL

Feeling It

IT'S AN EXHAUSTING experience trying to keep up with Eric Krasno for even a single night of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. Around 8 p.m., he walked off the outside stage of the Fiya Fest after an exhilarating set with Cyril Neville and Dr. Klaw, the supergroup he plays in alongside Nigel Hall, Adam Deitch and Dumpstaphunk's Ian Neville and Nick Daniels. As he chatted with friends and wiped sweat from his face with a towel, a Fiya staff member grabbed Krasno's arm and gently nudged him away. He had to get inside to the larger stage, where his Soulive bandmates were waiting and would soon start a funkified set with James Brown sax man Maceo Parker. When *that* ended at 10:30 p.m., and an overheated, enervated crowd drifted out, Krasno had some brief chill time backstage, before he headed back to his New Orleans digs to rest for a while.

He was preparing for the night's final gig—or the next day's first—as he took the stage at 2:30 a.m. in the French Quarter with Oteil Burbridge, Deitch, Hall and their special guest, jazz trumpet master Nicholas Payton. Kofi Burbridge and Neal Evans also dropped by for a mind-bending night of music. For at least one observer who stumbled out into the street as daylight approached, it was an exhausting and exhilarating musical adventure. Krasno kept up the same pace for two weeks. And these manic New Orleans days are but a microcosm of his life and a metaphor for his career; Krasno seems to be everywhere.

As a guitarist, producer, bandleader, songwriter and entrepreneur, it often seems there are few corners of the musical world that Krasno hasn't touched in recent years. He's best known for playing with Lettuce and Soulive since 1992 and 1999, respectively. But he's also made his mark as a producer, label owner and guitarist for a wide range of artists—from soul legend Aaron Neville to melodic crunch duo The London Souls, both of whom record for Krasno's Feel Records. He frequently plays with Phil Lesh & Friends and, more recently, Billy & The Kids. He has written songs for the Tedeschi Trucks Band, with whom he also toured as a fill-in bassist in 2013, and recorded with The Roots, Talib Kweli, Redman, Pretty Lights and even 50 Cent.

Lettuce drummer Adam Deitch, who met Krasno and the rest of the funk group's founding lineup during a high-school summer program at the Berklee College of Music, sums up why his longtime friend and collaborator can slide seamlessly into so many projects: "He's a quite awesome person that people love to be around."

"I'm usually the guy getting things done and pushing other people's albums along, and I needed someone to help me with that." ERIC KRASNO

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KRASNO WILL RELEASE HIS long-awaited solo debut, *Blood from a Stone*, on July 8 through Feel. It will be followed in short succession this summer and fall by the Eric Krasno Band's first tour. The album features Derek Trucks, as well as members of Soulive, Lettuce and The London Souls, but the focus is squarely on Krasno: his songs, his playing and, for the first time, his singing.

"I've been writing vocal songs for other people to sing for a while, and I always sang on the demos," Krasno says. "And when we first started this project, I thought I might do the same thing—bring someone else in to sing my parts, or maybe a bunch of different people. But as work on the album went on, I thought more and more that I should sing it all myself, and I really worked on it. Every time I play a show or sing live, I get better and more comfortable."

The core of *Blood from a Stone* began several years ago during a Maine writing session Krasno had with Dave Gutter of the band Rustic Overtones.

"I went up to Maine and, within a day, we had three or four songs that ended up on the album," says Krasno, sipping a beer in a bar around the corner from his Greenpoint, Brooklyn apartment. "We were being so productive that we set up a studio in a barn and Chris [St. Hilaire, The London Souls' drummer], Stu [Mahan, bass] and Nigel [Hall, keys] came up to demo the songs, and most of them ended up being on the record."

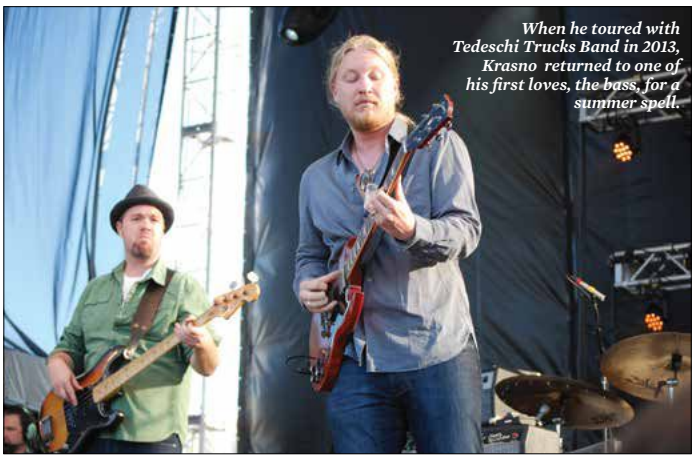
After those initial sessions, Krasno continued to work on his solo record between his other projects. "I was so busy with different things," he says. "I held onto a few of those tracks and ideas and worked on the album off and on for a few years."

When he found himself not quite able to put the finishing touches on the album, Krasno hooked up with Jeremy Most, who has worked with Emily King and many others. Most added some instrumentation and became the project's co-producer, giving the collection of blues and jazz-influenced tunes a more modern, minimalist touch.

"I'm usually the guy getting things done and pushing other people's albums along, and I needed someone to help me with that," says Krasno. "I loved Jeremy's production on Emily King's albums. We reconnected after one of their shows and I played him the music. He loved it and had some ideas right away, which was really welcome. The flight was almost there, but I couldn't land it and he helped me bring it in.

Jay Sansone

Krasno, above with Lesh, credits the Dead with inspiring his newfound love of singing.



When he toured with Tedeschi Trucks Band in 2013, Krasno returned to one of his first loves, the bass, for a summer spell.

"I liked the tracks, but they didn't feel like an album, and Jeremy helped me zone in and make some decisions about which tracks fit together and made for a cool journey. You want an album to sound cohesive, but not for every track to sound the same."

The album's long gestation gave Krasno a chance to grow into the music—to adapt to the songs as a singing frontman and whip the material into shape before hitting the road. "I'm really ready and very excited to go out and do this now," he says. "For years, I was more used to playing jazz and funk, mostly instrumental and jam-based, and I've gotten more and more into performing songs."

Krasno's love of more song-oriented performances grew during his summer-long stint as Tedeschi Trucks Band's bassist, in between Oteil Burbridge's departure and Tim Lefebrve's arrival. It thrilled him to hear crowds singing along, especially to the four songs he co-wrote on TTB's *Made Up Mind*. His subsequent performances with Billy & The Kids and Lesh, playing the beloved Grateful Dead repertoire to appreciative audiences, furthered the feeling.

"I love jamming and being improvisational—and the Jazz Fest shows are the mecca where we try to see if we can take that vibration to another level," says Krasno. "You also do that performing with the Grateful Dead camp, of course, but with them, it all starts with the songs, which is very apparent when every tune becomes a spirited sing-along. And everyone in my band is going to be singing, which is something I learned to love from playing the Dead music—all those harmonies—and missed in my other bands. I grew up on that music, so I'm kind of excited to make a full circle back to where I actually began."

Krasno, a native of New Canaan, Conn., traces his own musical awakening to seeing the Dead and Allman Brothers as a young teenager and hanging around his brother Jeff's band in their family basement. He considers that Berklee summer program—where he first bonded with Deitch, guitarist Adam Smirnoff, bassist Erick Coomes and saxophonist Ryan Zoidis when he was only 16—the true start of his own career. Thrilled to find like-minded peers, the group jammed their summer away and pledged to return together in two years, a promise they remarkably all kept. A year later, Krasno transferred to Hampshire College, in part to study with jazz saxophonist Yusef Lateef. Lettuce kept playing together, but during a pause while most of the other members were in the funk/hip-hop group Fatbag, Krasno joined up with brothers Neal and Alan Evans as Soulive. Even as that band began to pound the touring circuit and record, Krasno remained in touch with Lettuce, which continued to perform whenever possible.

"Kraz is the godfather of the crew and has always been the guy who helped everyone out all the time," says Deitch. "None of this would have happened without him."

* * *

KRASNO MAY HAVE BEEN born into his role. His grandfather Lou Krasno was a renowned klezmer and gypsy jazz violinist who fronted a group called the Gypsy Gems. His father Richard, a longtime academic and college administrator, is a skilled musician who was a DJ in San Francisco during the late '60s. His uncle Ron Kaplan—a Chicago bass player who became a booking agent—worked with Buddy Guy, Herbie Hancock and others, and was very involved in helping Lettuce and Soulive grow in their earliest days. And Jeff Krasno managed both Lettuce and Soulive and started Velour Recordings, which released the bands' first albums.

"For a good while, Kraz was the only one who understood how to book Lettuce—how to get us shows, how to get paid," says Deitch. "We were all about showing up and handling the music part but, at first, he alone saw the other side of this. He's inspired all of us to be better businessmen—to be better at handling all the other stuff beyond the notes."

Deitch says that everyone's respect for Krasno and their long-term friendships helped cushion the blow when the guitarist announced he would ease up on touring with Lettuce; he now appears with the band at select dates.

"I just decided that I really wanted to push Lettuce and give it a fair shot," says Deitch. "Everyone was on the same page, except Kraz, who was like, 'I appreciate what you want to do but I need to do, something else.' He's a very good communicator, in terms of both friends and business. We totally understand what he wants to do and, as friends, we support him."

While Krasno is preparing to release *Blood from a Stone* and hit the road with his solo band, don't expect his focus to become singular. Krasno is adamant that Soulive and Lettuce aren't going anywhere. He will keep performing with Lesh and Kreutzmann—and participating in the type of collaborative performances that have earned Krasno the distinction of being the guitarist who has appeared at New York jam-scene clubhouse Brooklyn Bowl the most. He's also producing a movie in New Orleans, *Take Me to the River, Volume 2*, which focuses on the city's rich musical heritage and bringing some of the city's rock and soul legends together for collaborations with younger musicians and MCs.

Krasno's ability to remain both musically restless and ever-focused and calm is impressive and reminiscent of Warren Haynes, with whom he shares a management team and a mutual respect.

"Eric is one of those cats who has a good vibe and adapts well to different settings," says Haynes. "Moving across genres, as he does, starts with having a reverence for so many different approaches—being truly moved by different types of music and studying what makes them tick. In order to be convincing in a lot of different settings, you have to have passion for them all and study them more than just a little bit. You have to go deeper and have that be reflected in your own voice. It's really kind of a rare quality, and something Eric clearly possesses."

Bill Kelly, Dean Budnick

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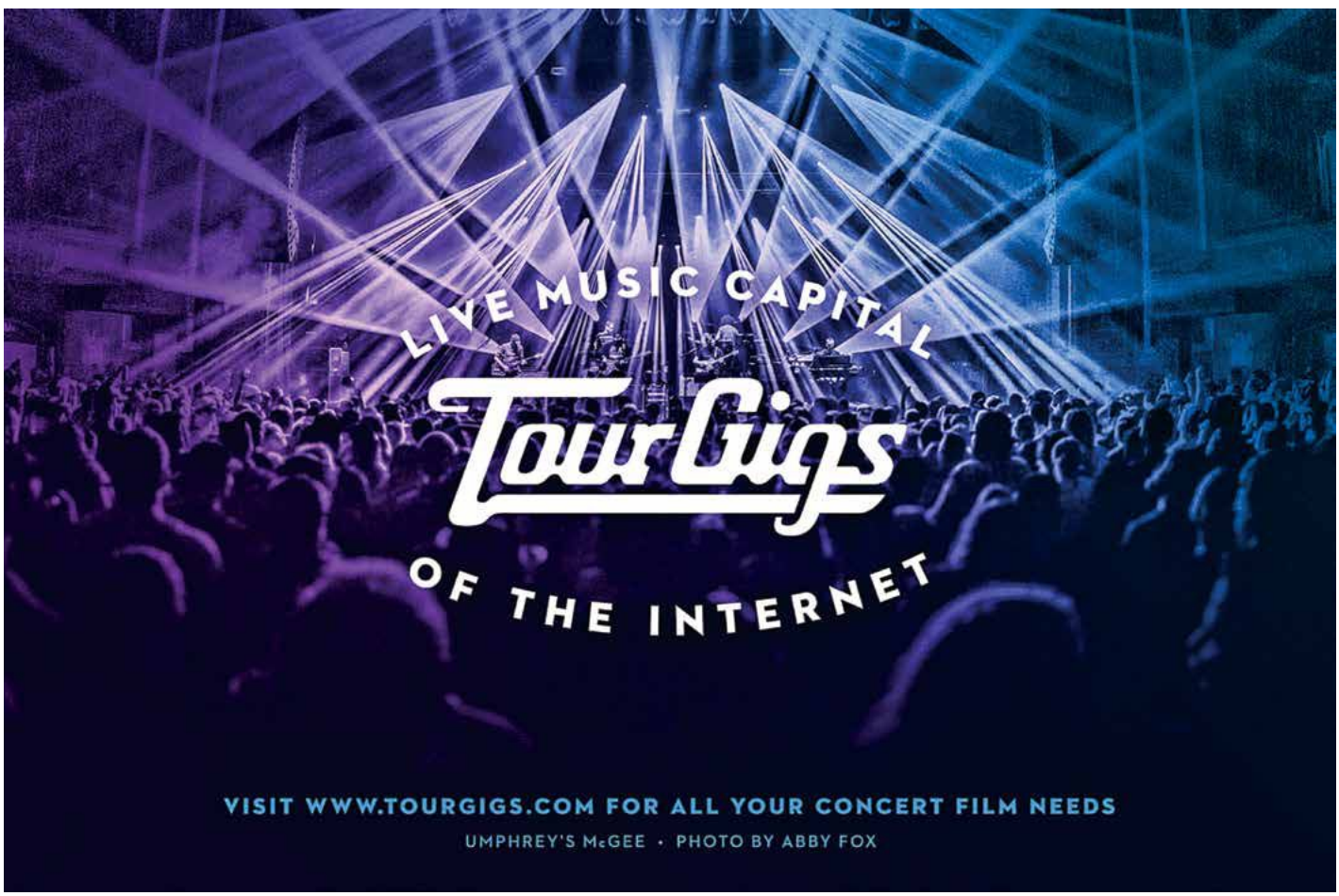
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THE GOOD GOVERNOR

Politically active without being a political aspirant, Ziggy Marley returns with a new, self-titled album and some strongly held beliefs.

BY LARSON SUTTON

In this, the summer of our political discontent, there is another voice calling for change whose favorables remain high. Pundits will trumpet his progressive viewpoints and declare him a steadfast populist. Though he's a scion of reggae's lion king, this eldest son of one of the most famous men in the world has never rested his 30-year career on the laurels of his lineage. He speaks his positivity often and sometimes in proverbs, and is rarely seen without his 100-watt smile. Even his name carries the euphonious zing of a winning campaign: Ziggy 2016.

There are just two problems with this potential alternative candidate: Ziggy Marley, who turns 48 in October, is a native of Jamaica and—even without that constitutional disqualifier—he doesn't want the job. "I don't want to be political," says Marley, taking a break from band rehearsals in Los Angeles. "I made a decision years ago. I don't want to write about politics. I want to write about spirituality and personality."

Marley's previous five studio albums have mostly been about building coalitions of love, from 2003's *Dragonfly* through 2014's *Fly Rasta*. He's also racked up a number of Best Reggae Album Grammys along the way, and he's still affable and relaxed in conversation. He responds candidly but in a quietly measured manner. Marley can certainly still be optimistic but, at the moment, he is concerned.

"There is no future to see if we don't come together," he sings on "Start It Up," the opening track of his sixth solo record, the self-titled *Ziggy Marley.* The sunny daze bop belies the unambiguous recruitment for revolution, urging people to act now. It's just the beginning of warnings and wake-up calls loaded into the dozen songs that lyrically recall protest folk and despondent blues.

Marley accepts the assessment with mellow indifference. "I don't want to tell you what it is," he says with a laugh. "I have no idea what it is. I just play the music, and I'm happy it gives you what it gives you because of who you are."

It's been a little harder to label Marley with each successive recording. He entered the spotlight in the mid-1980s as a teen with brother Stephen and sisters Cedella and Sharon in The Melody Makers. The group's early output was closest in style to the traditional one-drop reggae popularized by their late father, Bob Marley, though Bob's approach, to begin with, was already a hybrid of mento, ska and American forms of R&B, rock and blues.

Three decades later, Ziggy's latest collection, too, bounces between genres, and he employed the talents of both his touring band and longtime aces like drummer Stephen Ferrone of Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers and jazz session legend Abraham Laboriel on bass. "The people I worked with on this record I have worked with before," says Marley. "They still bring something else to the table.

Gregory Bojorquez

They're not just coming to recreate, but to be creative also."

Marley's guitar tandem consists of Ian "Breezy" Coleman and Takeshi Akimoto. Coleman has worked with Marley since the Melody Maker days of 1989, while Akimoto joined in 2003 for Marley's solo debut, *Dragonfly*. Both have seen firsthand Ziggy's growth as an artist and a man.

"He's more mature in his execution, his business and his family," says Coleman. "He's a good governor."

Akimoto points to Marley's determination to get better as central to his continued success. "He's improving as he is changing," he says.

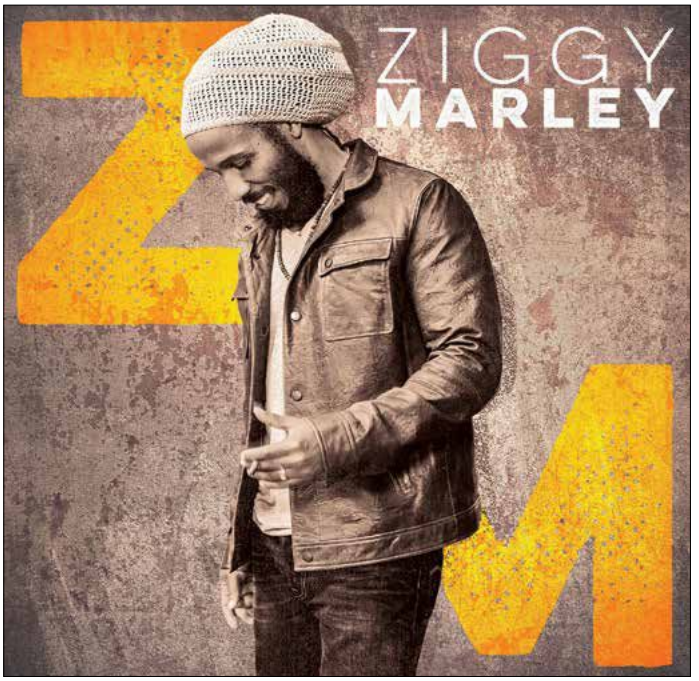
Writing and producing his latest album himself, Marley took on such tasks as charting horn parts for guests The Regiment Horns and directing the voices of the One World Chorus. "I enjoy it, and it is difficult at the same time, sometimes," Marley says. "I understand the difficult part is a necessary part. That is how you grow."

There are some time signature shifts and funky dance-floor breaks. There are hints of old-school new wave, with popping synths and drum programming, or whispers of Spanish guitar and ironic pan drum accents.

Coleman, who worked with Ziggy on the final mix of the record, says that they were driven to find that winning combination in each song. "We have to feel it," the guitarist explains. "We like to get the mix started from the drum and bass, get them grooving. Then, all other things can be added. It's all about space and timing."

Marley adds: "I'm looking to make music interesting for those who look deeper into it."

On the most critical and melancholy cut, "Heaven Can't Take It," Stephen Marley drops in for a vocal cameo and borrows from patriarch Bob's "Zion Train" on its somber, dirge-like outro. It's a stinging appraisal of failed leadership, racial divides and civil violence, and is as sad and frustrated as Ziggy's ever allowed himself to be on any song.



"I don't know if these are the leaders we even want," says Marley. "Across the world, the leaders have let down the people, this planet. There is another generation coming—our children. We have to instill these things from childhood. It's up to us."

LEADERSHIP HAS LONG BEEN a hallmark of the Marley family. Bob was an unrelenting competitor—earning the sobriquets Tuff Gong and Skipper—and unapologetic when winning foot races against his children on the beaches of Jamaica. Ferocious in his love of soccer, Bob bestowed his darting son David with the nickname of Ziggy, slang for a little marijuana joint, while on the backyard pitch.

Since 2006, Ziggy has been the skipper, issuing his music on his own independent label, Tuff Gong Worldwide, a descendant of Bob's Tuff Gong imprint, founded in Kingston in 1965. His company headquarters are based in Los Angeles, the city that Ziggy and his wife, Orly, and their four children also call home; they welcomed the newest Marley, son Isaiah, in March. While Ziggy has spent the better part of 30 years living in America, the lessons of his youth remain close.

"Culturally, the way I am, the way I think, the attitude—a lot of it is because I grew up not only in Jamaica, but in the culture of Rasta," he says. "I like it. It's a positive thing for me."

As for what he sees every day in this country, Marley is troubled. "What I feel now is compassion and concern for the people," he says. "I have come to have heartfelt feelings about the people in America and how the system is affecting [them]."

There are solutions, or at least responses, that Marley has offered, none of which is more stereotypical to fundamental Rastafarian beliefs (and, coincidentally, relevant to the current political climate) than marijuana use. While Marley has been a vocal supporter of legislation legalizing the plant, he has kept his personal usage relatively private.

It comes as a mild surprise, then, that a closer inspection of the cover of the new album reveals Ziggy holding a ziggy. "I didn't plan it out," says Marley with a chuckle. "We liked the picture and didn't mind that a ziggy was there."

There will be no candidate Marley in a future election cycle, but just imagine those sloganeers readying a subversive, smile-and-wink shorthand like Ziggy 4 '20.

Squaring the plant's sullied reputation on the bounty of misinformation put forth by corporations, Marley sees the necessity and benefit of re-education. "What I've read and understand is that certain industries profit from the suppression of marijuana and hemp," he says. "Fossil fuels. Big tobacco. All those guys that are used to drinking champagne are trying to maintain control of their income and their livelihood."

For his part, Marley conceived and published the graphic novel *Marijuanaman* and the accompanying animated Web series in 2011. Its eponymous companion song on the new record details the potential heroics of cannabis.

"It's reversed. The book is a complement to the song," Marley explains. "It's just a fun song, but it speaks to the truth. We talk about leaders, and if leaders were of a different temperament, a different mindset, there would be peace in the world."

He also cautions that his own mindset under the influence should not be dismissed as an evaporating puff of smoke. Within the anti-war anthem "Butterflies," Marley sings of the "crazy" things he sometimes thinks about when he partakes in the herb.

"I want to tell people that it is true that we can have peace

Continued on page 78

"Culturally, the way I am, the way I think, the attitude—a lot of it is because I grew up not only in Jamaica, but in the culture of Rasta. I like it. It's a positive thing for me." **ZIGGY MARLEY**

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Steve Gunn, William Tyler, Chris Forsyth and other alternative guitar gods are bringing American Primitive into the 21st century in their own beautifully hushed ways.

BY JESSE JARNOW

The New Golden Age of Guitar

LIKE PROFESSIONAL baseball or FM radio, the guitar has never disappeared from mainstream American culture, nor even lost its power, despite numerous declarations of its demise. "Laptops are the new guitars" is a cliché by now, and while that's not untrue, it does a disservice to the fact that the early 21st century has turned out to be a golden age for the more traditional of the two instruments, with a new school of dot-connecting players reinventing the seemingly outmoded, vibrating string box on a regular basis.

With a new aesthetic emerging from the late-'90s world of indie rock, Clapton is no longer God, as the old graffiti claimed, nor even (or especially) Jimmy Page, Eddie Van Halen, nor any other speed demon. Instead, these new players—on acoustic and electric, on six and 12 strings, loud and quiet—draw from a new pantheon. It privileges the punked guitar tandems at the heart of The Velvet Underground, Television, Sonic Youth, Sun City Girls, and more, admits underground '60s heroes (the Grateful Dead chief among them), the influences of minimalism and folds in a torrent of new global pathways, especially from West Africa and the Middle East. Sometimes the guitars groove, but it's not often dance music.

One major turn can be found in the coronation of the late John Fahey. Playing to small audiences in the '60s and until he died in 2001, Fahey was a champion of an elegant folk-blues style that he called American Primitive. Syncopated and mysterious and folk-derived, many of the new acoustic players connect back to Fahey's Takoma Records, whose catalog included Leo Kottke, Indian-influenced Robbie Basho and more.

Glenn Jones: A friend, collaborator and champion of John Fahey

The variations are infinite, as vast as any spoken language, a whole alternative guitar universe that shrugs off Rock and Roll Hall of Fame-branded super-session slingers and metalloid "Eruption"-ists. It is an exploding, worldwide conversation, a borderless and relentless post-millennial hunt for new territory by an underground of free-thinking musicians.

* * *

ON AN APRIL SUNDAY IN Brooklyn, the small back room at Union Pool is comfortably full and fully respectful. It's a conclave of new Primitivists. Headlining is the Boston-based Glenn Jones, a friend, collaborator and champion of John Fahey. A Fahey devotee since the early 1970s, Jones' playing brings the music to its most loving extreme, each note sounding rich and handcrafted. On the bill is Anthony Pasquarosa, who switches between mystic 12-string fingerpicking and frailing banjo. Though he doesn't play any this night, he also has a regular handful of Grateful Dead songs in his set, including the "Lady with a Fan" section of "Terrapin Station" stretched to one logical folk destination.

Laura Baird, from a pocket of Philadelphia folkies, provides some spare, Sunday evening banjo. Also playing is Alan Licht, from a whole other lineage of New York avant-players stretching back to the '70s. There have always been people experimenting with the guitar,

Steve Gunn: New model guitar hero

Constance Mensh

but the audience now seems more vast, the outlets more plentiful. If the crowds are still small and the profits meager, it's perhaps only because the albums and players have multiplied so quickly. The collapse of the American recording industry hasn't helped profits, but it has connected many obscure musicians to a network of new audiences.

Beginning a solo career after playing with the Boston band Cul de Sac starting in the late '80s, Glenn Jones first noticed the vast mushrooming of players in 2003 in the idyllic Vermont climes of the Brattleboro Free Folk Festival. "It was amazing," he says, "like a combination of free jazz and avant-folk and all that. [Before that], you'd go to shows and it'd be all guys, but I went to this and it was the first place that I saw women participating."

Jones encountered the Northampton regulars (like drummer Chris Corsano and the weird-folk-drone-jam supergroups Tower Recordings and Sunburned Hand of the Man), the Garcia-loving strange-stringer Tom Carter, and—most strikingly—a 32-year-old guitarist named Jack Rose. The spark of the Philadelphia scene, who had played in the electric-drone band Pelt, Rose became to John Fahey what Bob Dylan was to Woody Guthrie, absorbing his musical and personal mannerisms in search of his own voice. Jones struck up a close friendship with Rose, 18 years his junior, often touring together until Rose's untimely death from a heart attack six years later.

"I don't want to canonize Jack too much in a way that he would get irritated by, but whenever he ditched [drone-rock band] Pelt and started doing his own thing, that was—in my mind—when that movement started up," says Cory Rayborn, founder of Three Lobed Recordings, a label as responsible as any for documenting the rich new world. "It was around that time that Ben [Chasny] started doing his thing out in California, too. And then you start to see all the other satellites and things along those lines." Around this same time, *Spin* published Byron Coley's retrospective on Fahey, which Glenn Jones points to as well.

In many ways, Jones still can't believe the resiliency of American Primitive guitar and its practitioners. "When [Robbie] Basho died [in 1986], none of his records were in print," Jones says. "CDs were just starting to come out, and I thought, 'In 10 years, no one's gonna know who this guy was.'"

It took nearly 20 years, but the Basho revival has come, too. This summer will see the release of *Basket Full of Dragons*, the second Basho tribute organized by Buck Curran, a guitar maker, one-half of the Maine-based Arborea and a solo artist with his debut album set for release this summer on ESP-Disk'. Already a fan of Indian music when he discovered Basho, Curran says: "I thought of what a beautiful thing it is that [we'd] both separately drawn inspiration from musical branches that are rooted in the same source material."

Like others, Curran points out the widespread influence of the Internet on music at large. "YouTube has been a major advancement," he says.

Chris Forsyth: His soaring leads find a spot between fluid Jerry zones and the neon starlight of Television's Marquee Moon

"It's an archival gold mine. From learning to play guitar, to listening to contemporary albums, to rare, live historical performances."

It's not a radical opinion so much as a fact: There is more music than ever before, not only because of the long-term accumulation of recordings, but because the amount of music released each year is far greater than ever before, an outgrowth of contemporary recording and distribution technologies. Music that once comprised micro-niches can now find bigger audiences and more practitioners than ever before, albeit with even fewer profits spread over many more musicians.

Labels like California's Tompkins Square, Brooklyn's VDSQ and North Carolina's Three Lobed (home to Jack Rose and many others) turn out new voices on the regular. Among VDSQ's latest, for example, is the proper debut from North Carolina-based Sarah Louise, who has a new kind of spiraling voice all her own. "What is she *doing* with her right hand?" Glenn Jones wonders.

"In today's digital age, the appeal of the natural speaks to certain music fans more than ever," says VDSQ founder Steve Lowenthal. "In some ways, it can feel like a crucial escape from the constant beeping and alerts of modern life."

It is perhaps Bhutanese guitarist Tashi Dorji who best exemplifies the excitement of the (mostly) acoustic part of the guitar renaissance. Arriving with a singular new voice on his 2009 solo debut, Dorji creates chaotic improvisations that sometimes, all-too-briefly, open up into lush gardens of tonality. There's nothing American or folky about it, as much as it's music in its purest mode, a musician negotiating with his ears and instrument in real time. At any point in the past century, at least, somebody *could* have made the music that Dorji (or any one of these acoustic guitar players) makes. But they didn't.

* * *

"NEVER POINT YOUR GUITAR at anyone" ranks at No. 6 on Captain Beefheart's 10 Commandments of Guitar Playing, as translated by Magic Band guitarist Moris Tepper. It's good advice and seems to cast shade on the guitar-as-phallic-symbol school of playing. Most of the advice is more abstract. "Listen to the birds" is No. 1. "That's where all music comes from." One agreed-on recognizance of the new guitarists is the pure lameness of the old rock/metal move of wielding guitars like laser-zapping phallic weaponry. Almost none of them could be said to have a signature guitar face.

Continued on page 79

"I started to feel a little trapped and constrained in what I could do personally and how I was perceived because there's such a huge shadow that's cast around that style. I was trying to be a little more expansive than those parameters. Singing was something I was building up to."

STEVE GUNN

10 Recent Doorways into the New Golden Age of Guitar

Glenn Jones
Fleeting (THRILL JOCKEY)
The latest from one of the progenitors of the American Primitive revival, each note lovingly handcrafted.

Marisa Anderson
Into the Light (MISSISSIPPI)
Spare, solo space blues from the Portland-based guitarist, often featuring two guitars in haunted duet.

William Tyler
Modern Country (MERGE)
Adventurous, cinematic and intricate Americana from Nashville, featuring Wilco's Glenn Kotche on drums.

Steve Gunn
Eyes on the Lines (MATADOR)
Traveling the peaceful, easy folkways with soaring guitars, acoustic diversions and top-notch songwriting.

Chris Forsyth & The Solar Motel Band
The Rarity of Experience (NO QUARTER)
The high wire tension of Television and the martian tendencies of the Grateful Dead plus fist-pumping crescendos.

Sarah Louise
VDSQ, Solo Acoustic, Vol. 12 (VDSQ)
Magical and crystalline 12-string acoustic spirals create a breathless and unceasing instrumental ripple.

Six Organs of Admittance
Hexadic II (DRAG CITY)
Otherworldly acoustic shimmers written with the Hexadic compositional system created by acoustic/electric nu-psych hero Ben Chasny.

Ryley Walker
Primrose Green (DEAD OCEANS)
Rich and idiosyncratic jazz-folk that sounds like a path Van Morrison never took, glowing with warm Rhodes and mystic soul.

Sir Richard Bishop
Tangier Sessions (DRAG CITY)
Co-founder of the legendary Sun City Girls, Bishop continues to filter scales and traditions via his elegant and roguish guitar voice.

Tashi Dorji
Tashi Dorji (HERMIT HUT)
Improvisations in the singular voice of the young Bhutanese guitaist, dissonance flowering into lush and gorgeous valleys.

Constance Mensh

Yeasayer rebounds from a four-year break between albums with a new sound that's equal parts Can and Curious George

BY RYAN REED

Goodbye. Amen. Hello.

"I'M ALWAYS really interested in what's appealing to a three year old," says Anand Wilder. For the past decade, his band, Yeasayer, has specialized in electro-acoustic art-pop menageries—sonic pop-up books with enough shifting colors to delight both giddy toddlers and Brooklyn hipsters. Wilder's been ruminating on these connections, on the line between highbrow experimentation and crowd-pleasing pop. His three-year-old daughter, born around the release of 2012's *Fragrant World*, has served as the perfect sounding board.

Naturally, Wilder's been playing her a lot of music by German krautrock outfit Can. "We've been listening to a lot of *Tago Mago*," he says of their car rides. "And for the past week, I can't put on the news or listen to anything. It's, ''Mushroom' song! I want to hear the 'Mushroom' song!' It's interesting because, for me, that was an album I came to as a 19-20 year old in college learning about experimental, weird music and having that really blow my mind and be like, 'Wow, when did this come out? 1971? This is so avant-garde. I can't believe I didn't know this before.' But the hypnotic quality of the music definitely translates to a three year old. You don't have to be an adult to appreciate it. For her, it will just be an album her dad is playing alongside the *Curious George* stories."

Fascinated by the titular mushroom, the repetitive grooves and the eerie thunderstorm effects, she often asks her father about these strange sound combinations—a key aspect of Wilder's own band. "It's their art. They can do whatever they want. I think that's important for a three year old to know," he says. "She's gonna receive all the rules from just growing up and hearing all the drivel that's out there, but there are really no rules. You can do whatever you want. It's just sound."

Yeasayer's fourth LP, *Amen & Goodbye*, is the product of that borderless mindset—and the result is their most cohesive marriage of the childlike and the cerebral. Fittingly, it was also informed by a rainstorm. In the summer of 2014, after months of working on individual demos, the trio—Wilder, Chris Keating and Ira Wolf Tuton—decamped to the idyllic Outlier Inn, a recording studio located 90 miles from New York City, in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains.

"[The studio] was in this really bucolic setting where you could walk outside and have a conversation with a chicken or a goat," Wilder says. "We'd have to turn off the electric fence because of the hum it would cause with the vocals, and immediately, the goats would escape. Ira would have to go wrangle them. I wonder if I have some pictures of him. I should put those online."

They pushed themselves to unplug their laptops and embrace a more organic template than the electronic-heavy *Fragrant World*. They tracked live to analog tape, experimented with non-rock instruments like bouzouki and tubular bells, and arranged three-part vocal harmonies (à la The Beatles' "Because") using a field microphone in a geodesic dome.

"When we went out on tour for *Fragrant World*, a lot of the songs had metamorphosed into something more organic, replacing sounds with guitar live," Wilder says. "There's always that dream of, 'We have to capture that live energy in the studio,' and inevitably, you can never really capture that. Live performances always sound a little off. [With our previous albums], we were trying to push the boundaries of electronic music and see how we could engage with our contemporaries—and the music, the playing might have suffered. I think, sometimes, electronic music can be very cold, and we wanted to get back into playing instruments, making instruments sound strange, altering instruments—relying more on acoustic instruments, acoustic drums, mic placements, manipulating tape. I didn't want to be looking at a screen as much.

"I think one of the first songs we worked on Upstate was 'Daughters of Cain,' and we were very committed to singing three-part harmony around one microphone," he continues. "It's a very romantic ideal—you picture The Beatles or Crosby, Stills & Nash or something. When you have three very different voices and you're not used to it, it's very difficult, and you constantly have to be like, 'Chris, you move back a bit and stand up a little straighter; Ira, put a little more nasality into your voice to get that breath right.' You kind of screw yourself later on because you can't really turn up one vocal."

But the fragility of these analog sessions proved to be costly: A summer rainstorm (recorded for the opening seconds of the folk-funk hodgepodge "Gerson's Whistle") caused a ceiling leak in the control room, flooding the space and damaging some equipment and freshly recorded tape. Instead of lingering on the near-disaster, the band chose to brand the incident as a happy accident.

"It was demoralizing, but it wasn't that big a deal," Wilder says. "If you really like something and remember what it was, you can recreate it. And some things led us into complete new directions."

After failing to spark a connection with a producer the trio choose not to name, Yeasayer pondered their next move. "We had material pretty early on that we liked," Keating says. "But we weren't sure how to work on it. We had songs even right after we came off tour, but it was a lot of, 'What kind of synthesizers do we want to use? Do we want to produce ourselves?' We've been touring so much since 2008 that it was like, 'Let's take a little reset here.' We're in our 30s, and we're not little kids anymore."

The band's label, Mute, presented a list of potential producers, and one stood out: percussionist Joey Waronker, whom the band recognized from his work with Beck and Thom Yorke's Atoms for Peace.

"I saw him drum with Beck when I was probably 14, and then again when I was 17," Keating says. "So I knew his name as a drummer and a figure in that world for basically 20 years. It was someone you were familiar with as a name for production as opposed to some guy recommended by a record label. It was nice to have someone whose opinion you respect."

The collaboration proved to be even more fruitful than expected. Waronker essentially joined the band during their sessions in a small Brooklyn production studio, playing a live drum kit augmented with exotic percussion devices to compile a treasure trove of rhythm tracks. You can hear the end result of that live-on-the-floor sweat throughout the LP: "Dead Sea Scrolls" is built on snarling bass, a Turtles-inspired "ba-ba-ba" chorus and a dizzying, mishmashed drum track. (The song's centerpiece is a dissonant, first-take saxophone solo recorded during a drunken session.)

"With Joey being a drummer and none of us being proper drummers, he filled out a skill set that none of us really had," Wilder says. "But I didn't really understand his skill set until we started playing with him. We were in a very small production room, which our manager wanted us to have for about two weeks before we moved into a big recording studio, but we ended up being in the production room the whole time.

"Joey would set up this tiny kit with a box with jangles in it, these Brazilian percussion pieces, and he would get these amazing sounds out of this little kit," he continues. "He would play along with Chris on the Tempest [drum machine]. We would get these unique-sounding loops. I would record them throughout the song, then write down, 'This sounds good at this measure,' then we'd go back, and it would

Residents of their own Fragrant World: *Anand Wilder, Ira Wolf Tuton, Chris Keating (l-r)*

"There's always that dream of, 'We have to capture that live energy in the studio,' and inevitably, you can never really capture that. Live performances always sound a little off."

ANAND WILDER

invariably sound really good. And we'd go, 'OK, that's the verse feel.' It was better than something we would have done on our own because it had the combination of the live and the synthetic drum machine. That set a nice, new atmosphere and texture for the album."

Tuton says Waronker was the "perfect catalyst" to push Yeasayer's material somewhere fresh—despite the band's initial reservations. "We were very reticent to the idea of using a 'producer' because with so much of what we've done in the past, we've thought of ourselves as producers," he says. "That's part of what we take so much joy in and how we work together—we're constantly producing each other. But he motivated us to another level of musicianship. It's a very 'played' record."

That organic, hands-on-instruments approach wasn't accidental—nor is any creative decision Yeasayer makes. Tuton details their collective vision as being like three chemists surrounded by beakers, breaking down the various harmonic, lyrical and production threads that form a unified whole. *Amen & Goodbye* went through around 10 different recording stages: home demos, a stoned listening party at Wilder's house, free recording in New York City, the Outlier Inn sessions, the failed producer sessions, more demoing, the Waronker sessions, and various stops in between. Along the way, they recruited guest spots from psychedelic guitar god Delicate Steve (a pal who even performed in Tuton's wedding band), percussionist Mauro Refosco and singer Suzzy Roche of Irish-American folk trio The Roches, whose distinctive croon adds a sweetly sinister vibe to three tracks, including the electro-prog epic "I Am Chemistry."

That lengthy process resulted in a four-year gap between albums—Yeasayer's longest to date—but for Tuton, the delay was crucial in order to reboot and avoid stagnancy.

"We were definitely trying to switch it up album to album because we want to be honest with who we are as people and artists at the time," he says. "But the flipside of that is you don't want to pigeonhole yourself as the band who changes their sound every time. 'Here's our new sound! What's contemporary now?' That can lead to a level of dishonesty, which we try to shy away from. I think there was a level of being burned out on touring and working on things, and it took some time to intellectually recharge and regain motivation and focus and gain a little perspective to move forward with as much of a unified vision."

The trio's chief goal with this record was to continuously transform their sonic palette—even in the midst of simple pop songs like the funky "Silly Me"—by combining elements of every recording era into strange sonic patchworks.

"With our first album, I remember getting really high and listening to it while we were mixing and thinking, 'Why does this end part go on for so long? We should have made it change more!'" Wilder says. "With this one, we'd add more and more colors but also strip away and say, 'We don't need to have that bit in there anymore—that sound has been replaced.' You slowly strip things away and you can really feel all the colors very vividly. They're not all washing together to create some indistinguishable brown sludge."

Boasting a handful of clear singles ("Silly Me," "Dead Sea Scrolls"), *Amen & Goodbye* has more radio potential than any other Yeasayer LP—but even its breeziest hooks are constructed with widescreen sonic detail, often offset with dark lyrical content. "The moloch demands sacrifice," Keating sings on "Scrolls," which takes aim at "fake gods" in modern society. Ambient-psych lullaby "Prophecy Gun" charts similar faux-sacred territory. "That track was inspired by some Brian Eno stuff or Popul Vuh," Keating says. "It became this kind of meditative song with cryptic, pseudo-religious lyrics, and it was really fun to write. We knew the album needed these pauses and interesting spaces to give it a little more depth."

Wilder's gentlest song, the spacey lullaby "Uma," is also his most heart-wrenching—a dedication to his young daughter, purveyor of Can and *Curious George*, in which he croons, "Hope I still can make you smile/ When I get to be senile."

It's that dynamic balance—sweet and sinister, innocent and brooding, playful and experimental—that makes Yeasayer tick.

The Avett Brothers may have grown into Madison Square Garden headliners, but they still understand *True Sadness*

BY MIKE GREENHAUS

I and Love and New York

IT'S A SUNNY Friday afternoon in early April, and the members of The Avett Brothers are a few hours away from what may be the biggest headlining gig of their lives. Just over 15 years since brothers Scott and Seth Avett formed their eponymous band—and seven years after they helped bring string-based roots music back to the masses with their Rick Rubin-produced smash *I and Love and You*—the seven-person indie-folk ensemble is finally being anointed as a marquee Madison Square Garden headliner. A decade ago, it would have been unheard of for an Americana act from Mount Pleasant, N.C., a tiny community of under 1,700 residents, to book a show at the world's literal and self-branded "most famous arena" in the age of guitar-based indie rock. And, even though acoustic-influenced music has long since become an organic antidote for the more synthesized sounds permeating pop culture, The Avett Brothers are still the rare act to inch their way through New York's venue ranks all the way to MSG—grassroots style.

As assorted record label ambassadors arrive at the arena and rabid fans line up in front of the tour buses and 18-wheeler trucks jutting into a bustling 33rd Street, a sense of grandeur fills the hallowed halls. The group's four principals—the surprisingly clean-cut Avetts, bassist Bob Crawford and cellist Joe Kwon—are congregated in a greenroom reserved for interviews as stagehands make their final adjustments a few feet away. The Avetts are already dressed in their show clothes, which look remarkably like the rugged Southern gentleman threads the group have sported since they originally figured out how to unplug their instruments without losing their manic, hardcore energy—only these duds have higher price tags.

Tonight is the first time that Kwon, Scott and Seth have even set foot in MSG, let alone played here; Crawford, who grew up in New Jersey, warped his brain during a stretch of Dead shows at the Garden in 1991. "The first night, my seats were behind the stage, and I wandered around the venue trying to find a place with better sound," Crawford says with a laugh, remembering the three gigs he checked out during that memorable nine-night run. "It's just great to be here sober—and with short hair."

Given their tortoise-and-the-hare-like ascent, it makes sense that the Avetts are in a reflective "New York State of mind" as they prepare for their first show at this storied landmark—the film crew who documented the recording of their ninth album, the remix-influenced *True Sadness*, are hovering around, tracking the proceedings. Scott, Seth and Crawford are quick to point out early New York engagements at far smaller spaces, like the now-defunct Morningside Heights haunt Radio Perfecto and the anti-folk incubator Sidewalk Café in the East Village. Scott mentions that Radio Perfecto's listening space was only twice the size of their current greenroom. Crawford adds that the "fascinating" thing about their NYC debut is that singer-songwriters Regina Spektor and Langhorne Slim were among the 25 people in attendance—fellow expat Garden State hero Nicole Atkins, an indie-darling who met Crawford when she moved across the Mason-Dixon Line, even helped book some of their first tri-state area dates. Kwon, who joined the band a few years later, sits silently throughout the conversation, making his presence known through his warm smile and nods.

"I've got a tendency to downplay things and say, 'It's just another day at the office,' but there's a realization of how big a deal it is to play there," Scott says a few weeks later, thinking back on the band's Garden gig. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime, huge deal."

Though the Avetts didn't quite sell out the room, they managed to fill MSG on their own—instead of organizing a festival package as is the current norm—with only their friend Brandi Carlile providing support duties. They turned the performance into something of a New York City tribute, too, opening their set with "Talk on Indolence"—an 11-year-old song from indie release *Four Thieves Gone: The Robbinsville Sessions* that references a debaucherous night in the Big Apple—and bookending that wink with their Brooklyn love-letter, the sing-along "I and Love and You."

"We have a history of mission statements—you'll find one in *I and Love and You* and there's one for *Emotionalism*," Scott continues, shifting his thoughts back to the former album's lyrics, which have no doubt inspired more than a few yearbook quotes and wedding vows since its release in 2009. "'I and Love and You' was our first collaboration with Rick, and it was a stream of thoughts that we organized as a group. It was about what New York and Brooklyn mean for musicians from any small American town—reaching for that as the pinnacle and how intimidating that can be. But the city turned out to be really friendly as well and, ultimately, we were just asking for acceptance into that big world. We have a great conversation going with our audience."

That open dialogue is also what inspired Seth Avett to officially announce *True Sadness*' release with a candid letter to fans discussing the band's sonic evolution, the "different lives" that he and his brother now lead, and the increasingly blurry space between his civilian world and professional artistry. The Avett Brothers have long since evolved past their mix of punk, bluegrass and tent-revival theatrics into a more manicured roots-pop band with a gentle soul, yet the letter also described a brightly colored quilt of influences that include "threads of Queen, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Jimmie Rodgers, Tom Petty, Nine Inch Nails, Gillian Welch, Aretha Franklin, Walt Disney, Pink Floyd, Kings of Convenience, calypso of the 1950s and country of the 1930s" as well as rock-and-roll.

Perhaps most important, the letter served as a heads-up to fans that *True Sadness* was the result of a wildly different recording approach.

"We have to keep in mind that it's really not about us," Seth reflects of the band's earliest songs while walking through their MSG setlist, which spanned six of their albums and also included a few nods to their recently deceased

"We're finally able to play them like we initially heard them," Seth says of the live band's decision to include early material in their large-scale stage show. "Before, we just didn't have the tools."

Avery Peck

outlaw forefather Merle Haggard. "I can't always be the 22 year old that had this or that experience, but there probably is a 22 year old that's out there experiencing that sentiment right now. Those songs are great ways to connect with somebody who is having a similar moment."

"We've found ourselves in the very fortunate position of being hyper-aware of the experiences that our fans are having and the connections that are being made through our music," Scott adds. "It felt very natural to give a short and sweet heads-up: There's a record coming, and this is where we're at."

***TRUE SADNESS*, WHICH WAS** released in late June, arrives almost three years after The Avett Brothers' previous studio album. While the ensemble has issued all sorts of tour souvenirs during that time, it marks one of their longer lapses between releases. They dropped their last two efforts, sibling records *The Carpenter* (2012) and *Magpie and the Dandelion* (2013), in rapid succession and stayed on the road indefinitely. "Part of our learning process is realizing that it's less about quantity," Scott says. "Before, there was a sense of pride in releasing everything that we wrote, and now we feel much more content with ourselves. We don't have to prove anything. All we want to do is make the best album we can make, and that will take whatever time it takes. We toured for two years without a release, and, in many ways, each year has been bigger than the last."

The kernels for certain ideas on *True Sadness* date back over a decade; others, like "Divorce Separation Blues," were written more recently while Seth's marriage crumbled. Songs like "Victims of Life, "No Hard Feelings" and the album's title track all document a set of musicians who have experienced true personal sadness at a time when their professional careers have reached unprecedented heights. (Crawford, in particular, has dealt with a number of hardships in recent years, including his young daughter's battle with a brain tumor.)

"If you look at the first songs Scott and I wrote, they're more or less one-dimensional," Seth admits. "It was really about *me—my* heart being broken—and these tiny, little themes. The older you get, that theme of 'I'm lonely' feels small. The experiences we've had have opened our minds and have expanded the conversation within our band and among our families. It's just a natural outpouring of the information that we've taken in."

Crawford, Scott and Seth started hunkering down to demo song ideas for *True Sadness* in Asheville, N.C., as early as the winter of 2014 and spent a year, in Scott's words, "siphoning through those songs." Then, the band shipped out to Malibu, Calif., to record with Rubin, who has been the band's in-studio confidant since *I and Love and You*. From the start, they also limited the number of ideas they brought to the table. "Last time we made an album, we recorded too many songs, which caused us to release two records and, by the time we released the second record, we weren't the same people individually or artistically," Scott says. "As our friendship with Rick grows, the better music rises to the top quicker. The new sessions were, in some ways, a boot camp—not in the respect of it being really forced, but it felt like there was a major transition that happened. There was a big-time, before-and-after moment. We're just trying to be sincere about where we're coming from."

The sessions also marked the first time that the Avetts were truly able to take advantage of their current seven-member touring band,

"You're talking about the accumulation of experience and age and what comes with that is added perspective—good or bad, more complex or even simplified," Scott says of the band's personal growth in recent years. "Bob was talking about death earlier, and the elephant in the room with that is that it begs the question: 'How is your spirituality or your faith involved?' And that means lack of faith, too."

which also includes drummer Mike Marsh, pianist Paul Defiglia and violinist Tania Elizabeth. Revisiting an approach they last tried out in 2007, the full live band recorded a set of songs together during a single session before things got really trippy. After laying down a batch of ideas, at Rubin's suggestion the group handed their nuggets over to producer Jason Lader, best known for his work with acts like Maroon 5, Julian Casablancas and Jenny Lewis, to remix the cuts dance-floor-style. Then, the group, punctuated by Elizabeth's fiddle, used those bangers as inspirations while recording the final product.

"He took what we had done as a band and reimagined that, and we recaptured those ideas from him," Scott says. "We ended up reacting to the remixes on some of the songs—recording them with people playing those parts on live instruments ."

Oddly enough, the Avetts' original goal for *True Sadness* was to make a real-time, live-sounding record that captured the band's concert energy and, though the sessions quickly veered left to electronica production, the musicians feel that their communal vibe remains on the effort. (Early on, they also toyed with the idea of scaling things back to the original trio of Scott, Seth and Crawford simply playing banjo, guitar and standup bass—and the version of "Fisher Road to Hollywood" that made it on *True Sadness* is a relic from that plan of action.)

"We only recently have realized that we can appropriate a Beyoncé song or a Harry Belafonte song and haphazardly make it something that we can communicate," Seth offers. "We found the honest voice inside those covers. But we've realized that we can take that a step further with our original material and do the same thing with a song like [*True Sadness* standout] 'Ain't No Man.' It's helped us to see what other possibilities are out there."

IN CERTAIN WAYS, THE Avett Brothers were men without a country when they formed in 2000. Seth, who is now 35, and Scott, 40, both cut their teeth in dingy Southeast clubs in high school and college, eventually merging their talents into Scott's alt-rock band, Nemo. They originally conceived The Avett Brothers as a stripped-down parallel project that brought the front-porch-picking energy of their North Carolina surroundings to their DIY scene. Eventually charter member John Twomey left and bassist Crawford, whose résumé includes a stint in a Dead cover band, joined the group before their 2002 full-length debut, *Country Was* (which was released on manager Dolph Ramseur's Ramseur Records).

Long before Mumford & Sons reclaimed arenas for acoustic guitars, and peers Old Crow Medicine Show broke through with "Wagon Wheel," The Avett Brothers slowly made their mark thrashing banjos and other string instruments with punk-rock fervor. From the start, they made inroads within the jamband circuit and, while they never really improvised, their instrumentation, road-warrior mentality and fan-centric approach made them favorites on the modern festival scene.

> "If you look at the first songs Scott and I wrote, they're more or less one-dimensional. It was really about *me—my* heart being broken—and these tiny, little themes. The older you get, that theme of 'I'm lonely' feels small."
>
> **SETH AVETT**

The Avett Brothers in motion at MSG, 4/8/16

Avery Peck (MSG)

Describing their show in an interview with *Relix*'s sister site Jambands.com in 2006, Seth said, "In order to stay exciting for us, we let each night take on its own character and have its own life. We have never made a setlist in the four years we have been playing together. Before we walk onstage, we decide the first song and let it go from there. One of us will start a song and everyone else joins in." (Fun fact: The Avett Brothers are the first Jambands.com New Groove of the Month alum to headline MSG.)

"People talk about the culture of the Dead, and I think that we have something similar going," Crawford says. "There's a truth and an honesty that we share in our approach. Jerry wouldn't always hit the right note, but he'd hit the wrong note the right way."

Scott picks up on Crawford's thoughts, adding, "We're also not an institutionalized band."

After a few years of barnstorming, and adding Kwon to the mix, the quartet signed with Rubin's American Recordings imprint and released their smash *I and Love and You*. While the Avetts have always had a melodic heart and sincere soul, Rubin cleaned up their sound on the bouncy "Kick Drum Heart" and the swaying, piano-laden "Head Full of Doubt/Road Full of Promise," and, without drastically altering their formula, focused on hooks that are equally appealing to veteran festival-goers and earnest suburban teenagers attending their first concert. To their credit, the band continued trucking on as they always had, jumping from major-market dates to rural, outdoor festival performances and more intimate theater engagements, often within the same week.

"In a very real sense, you're going back to the first page of your journal every time you play one of those early songs," Seth says. "If you can stomach sharing that, then there's some value in it—possibly not for your own enjoyment, but there's still value in it."

The Avett Brothers are unquestionably one of the biggest touring acts in the country. While they've long since graduated to arenas for big holiday shows and homecoming engagements in North and South Carolina, in recent years, the Avetts have broken through to hockey rinks and amphitheaters in select markets throughout the Northeast, West Coast and Mountain States. Perennial festival favorites, The Avett Brothers are almost always billed within the top few rows on lineup announcements and, in February, they'll even launch their own destination event in Mexico. There's a fan-run Avett Brothers Wiki, the group has lent their music to *This Is 40*, *Parenthood* and Gap ads and, when Seth married actress Jennifer Carpenter over Memorial Day weekend, *People* reported on their nuptials. In a rare move for a band that has worked their way up from a Bonnaroo café tent to the main What Stage, their rollout for *True Sadness* included spots on *The Tonight Show*, *Today* and *CBS This Morning* in the same week. They are also at the center of the Southern revival dominating the current cultural landscape—a movement whose growth seems to echo a larger want for comfort, history and artistry in art, food and music during an era of instant access and eclecticism.

Yet, at the heart of their growth, The Avett Brothers remain a true family band, formed by siblings who, unlike the Robinsons and the Gallaghers, seem content to share the spotlight. Last year, Seth released a loving collection of Elliott Smith covers with Jessica Lea Mayfield. And instead of getting jealous about any critical acclaim his younger brother might have received, Scott praised the album for increasing Seth's confidence and reinforcing his sense of melody and production prowess.

"You know when two people are trying to get to the front of a line?" Scott asks rhetorically. "We've become the guys who put their hand out and say, 'Please, go ahead.' We know that our strength is in the patience we have with each other and the allowances that we can give to each other. Somebody once posted something online to the effect of, 'Scott should be thankful that his brother is Seth Avett.' When you're younger, you think, 'That's messed up.' But brothers who love each other say, 'That's terrific.' Seth and I know we both really need each other."

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didn't add much else. We wanted to keep it really stark. I didn't want really any kind of steel—I wanted to keep things more like synth strings, so he brought a Chamberlin string machine.

The one day that Dave and Gill—who were Ethan's friends—did come by, we had a really nice time and we hung out and came up with a couple of different arrangements for a couple of the songs. "To Be Young" was one of them. Then Emmylou came by and she had just gotten a bunch of pictures developed from the very first day of the very first Fallen Angels tour from their tour manager. He called himself the "Road Mangler"—he was the same guy that burned Gram's body. So I sat next to her, and she was so cool and so chilled out, and we looked at these photographs. It was a real special, wild moment to be there with her.

Later on, Dave put "To Be Young" on his record, and I know he tells people, "I wrote this with Ryan." He didn't write *any* of that song. I really don't want to burst anyone's bubble, but I'd already written the song before I showed it to them. They showed me the G7 chord, which is the first chord on a couple of different Smiths songs. I didn't know you could do the G7 chord, which is really beautiful, and I think they came up with these really cool harmonies for the bridge.

The way it went down later on is that, since I didn't really know how publishing or any of that stuff worked, when someone went, "Well, here in Nashville, if someone works on a song, you just give them half—we need to do song splits." I said, "Do whatever normally you would do." Then, later on, it was credited as a co-write. That's when I was like, "I really don't want to live in Nashville anymore."

That's just how it goes there. I'm not saying anybody was trying to pull a fast one on me, but it's always been weird for me later to hear: "Dave Rawlings wrote that song 'To Be Young.'" I'll be happy to pull out a demo from a year before he ever fucking heard that song.

Many of the songs on *Heartbreaker* remain in your repertoire. Given that you felt somewhat detached when you wrote them, how do you feel they fit in with the material you've written in subsequent years?

I prefer The Shining to The Cardinals when we go into our "exploration zone" with my older songs. I played almost all the guitar on *Cold Roses,* or sometimes J.P. Bowersock would do the second guitar and I would do the third guitar. I even played some of the bass and some of the drums. It was just the power of speedballs. The sound of that record was really Cat Popper on bass and me on guitar.

In songs like "Cold Roses" and "Magnolia Mountain," I was trying to get this Tony Iommi-by-way-of-Garcia-by-way-of-I-can't-play-guitar effect. There's this amazing guitar player that a lot of people aren't familiar with named Tara Key, and she's in a band called Antietam, and they made a record called *Burgoo.* She had this guitar style that reminded me of some place in between Thurston Moore's guitar vibe and Garcia or the Dorian scale. I was searching for that sweet spot where I could mess with that.

What's interesting is that The Shining crept into learning these *Heartbreaker* songs and other songs from my career with a really soft approach. I love that [guitarist] Mike Viola and everybody really wanted to know what they *meant*. The rehearsals were a very beautiful process—literally, we were playing the songs and I would stop and go, "We're covering this and I am, too, and let's figure out why."

We would sit and play for a minute and I would go, "Oh, man, this shit swings so much more." We would reference the recording, and The Shining had taken what I was looking for so much further out. Nowadays, when we get into those sections, even when we play "To Be Young," it's way more rockabilly—way more greaser. It's more Smiths meets *Eddie and the Cruisers*, which was always kind of my idea.

The other advantage of the newer band is that there's no pedal steel. In The Cardinals, and I've seen some footage, they would always mute my guitar. The whole band was wearing in-ears, so none of them were listening to each other onstage—as soon as The Cardinals switched to in-ears, the band's stage dynamic was forever gone. Really, the second Catherine Popper left The Cardinals, the band was gone, which is a shame because she really was the heart of the band. Brad [Pemberton] played "Cold Roses" with bundle sticks or brushes because he hit too hard—the only way we could keep it feeling like *American Beauty* was to try to cool him down. What's different now is that Freddie Bokkenheuser, as a drummer, can go from the quietest guy to the most King Diamond, which is so ridiculous and fun.

"Maybe that's partly why people enjoy *Heartbreaker*—there's a naiveté there, like when you see a child trying to describe outer space.."

RYAN ADAMS

As a band—and as a guitar player and singer—it makes me way less afraid to switch to an acoustic guitar to do a song like that, whereas, back in the day, I forced the issue more and more because I didn't feel heard. I was trying to work my way into the overall sound. The Cardinals can be a big, noisy wall of sound. I used a lot of reverb and Neal Casal was pretty dry, so there wasn't much of a blend. In The Shining, both Mike and I used Princeton Reverbs chained together. It makes all the difference—you can play within your own spectrum of sound, and we leave monitors onstage to just keep a little bit of the vocal going so we're hyper aware of how much sound we have. We have these big, fake amplifiers, but there's two Princetons inside of them. What's cool about them is that they work as sound diffusers. It keeps the onstage sound from Freddie to the organ to the bass to our two guitars; it keeps it all in that little semicircle. It's kind of the most amazing accident of all time. I suspect people have seen the pictures of Neil Young's *Rust Never Sleeps* tour. I've always wondered if he ever went: "Oh, my god, it sounds so much better."

The *Heartbreaker* reissue includes your first cover of Oasis' "Wonderwall" from a show at New York's Mercury Lounge in 2000. What inspired you to dig out that cover?

That's one of the first solo shows I ever played. People were over that song by then, but I thought, "There's more to this than anyone is even aware of." So I dug it out, and people would typically do the thing that they used to do where they would laugh. But, by the end, they wouldn't be laughing. I could push the envelope on the song. Much later on, I recorded "Wonderwall" for *Love Is Hell* because it fit into the interpersonal dialogue of that record. That record was very quietly about the time I lived in London. I was seeing someone who was English and, in England, you either like Blur or Oasis. They were like English football teams. The person I was dating was very much into Blur. When I ended up recording "Wonderwall" and making it much sadder and much more morose, it was because, as time went on, that reminded me of saying, "I'm telling you this is a really great song—you just have to listen to it completely broken down on an acoustic guitar."

Of course, by the time I recorded it, it was me lamenting that funny exchange that I had. It was futile trying to convince someone who doesn't like Oasis to like them. It's like trying to convince someone who doesn't like the Grateful Dead to listen to the Grateful Dead. They won't fucking do it. There's a preconceived notion in their mind.

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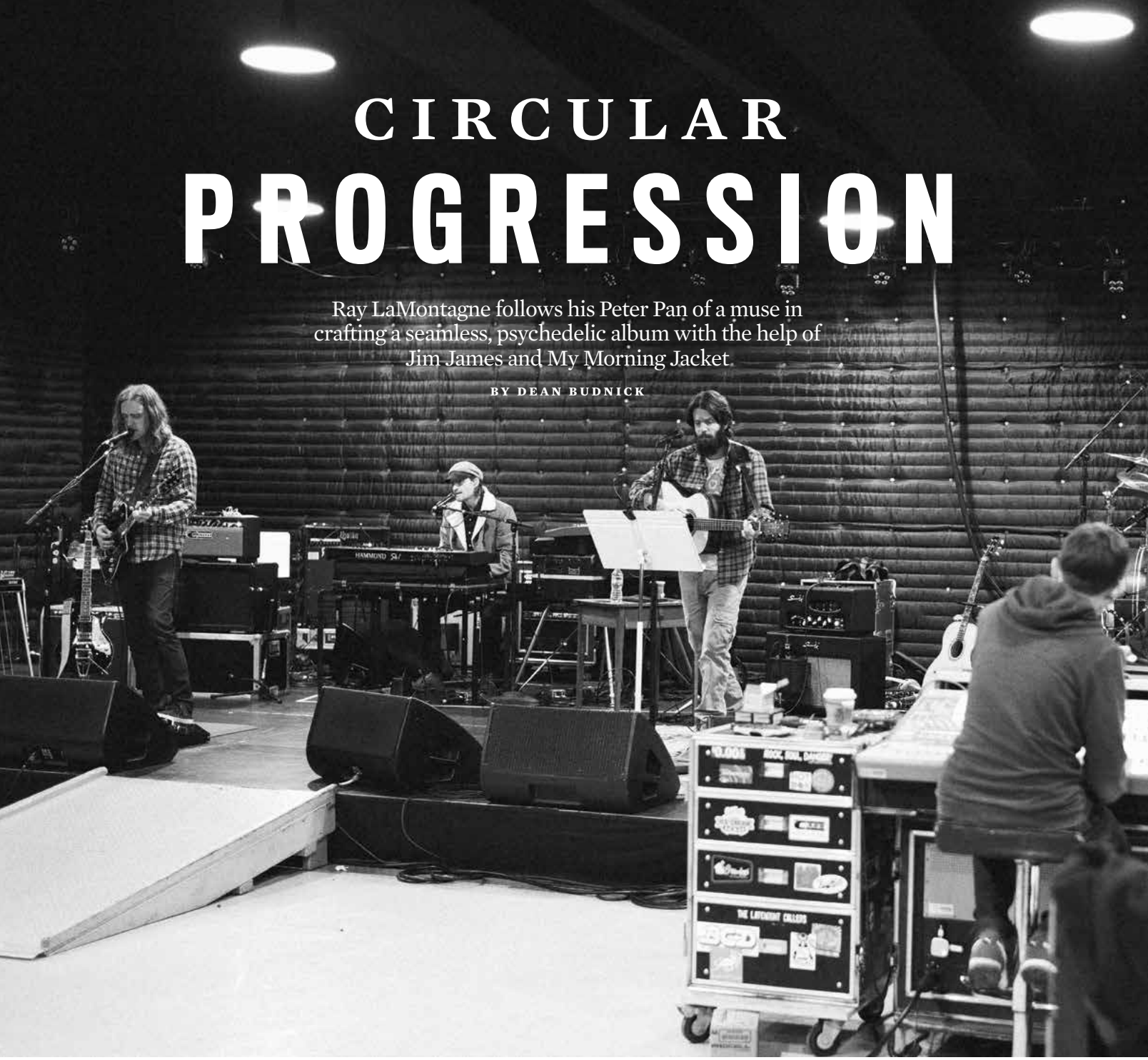
CIRCULAR PROGRESSION

Ray LaMontagne follows his Peter Pan of a muse in crafting a seamless, psychedelic album with the help of Jim James and My Morning Jacket

BY DEAN BUDNICK



Reid Long

THE SIXTH TIME WAS THE CHARM FOR RAY LAMONTAGNE. After recording five studio albums that fell short of his creative aims, he entered the studio with My Morning Jacket's Jim James and crafted *Ouroboros*, the first recording that fully captures his artistic intent. The record consists of two rich, nuanced suites of music that unfold over nearly 20 minutes apiece and reveal themselves anew with each listen. This would be an estimable achievement in any time period, but it's all the more so in an era of easily digestible iTunes singles.

But this *is* an era of easily digestible iTunes singles, and *Ouroboros* doesn't fit that bill. It's rewarding, entrancing and captivating—a creative expression that, for many listeners, is likely to endure as a resonant experience, which is just how Ray LaMontagne wanted it. The bean counters, however, not so much.

As much as the new album was a triumph—in fact, for the very reasons that the new album was a triumph—it became a source of consternation as well.

"Even after 12 years in the music business, I never really know where it's coming from, who's generating it—if it's management, the label, the publishers," LaMontagne says. "It comes to you, but it's always veiled; you never really know who is the one. And I still don't know. All I know is that someone, or a group of people, was extremely concerned. It was suggested to me that I re-record it from start to finish as an acoustic record so that people would understand it. That just pissed me off, really. I thought it was absurd. I don't know where that came from exactly, but I think there was a lot of head-scratching going on and a lot of people not really knowing how they could make it work because there wasn't a single of any kind.

"Jim and I said, 'Just put it in the world. I'm going to tour; people will find it. It may take 30 years for it to become a part of people's lives, but they'll find

it eventually.' I equated it to hiking on a trail and you come upon those little stone cairns that people make. There's no sign saying, 'Stone cairn, made by Joe, 2014, up ahead.' They just leave it there because it wants to be there and have people discover it."

THE PATH TO discovery began in January 2005. At that time, LaMontagne, then 31 years old, had just released his debut LP, *Trouble*, to critical acclaim. Two weeks after his national TV debut on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, he traveled to Louisville, Ky., for an appearance at a 200-capacity venue known as the Rudyard Kipling. On hand to take in that performance were the members of My Morning Jacket, who had been rehearsing nearby.

"Before *Trouble* even came out, our publishing guys, who we'd been with a long time [Chrysalis Music Publishing], had found Ray and were getting ready to sign him," Jim James recalls. "Jamie Cerreta, who's one of my best friends and has been my publisher for a long time now, played me the demos that Ray was working on. I was in awe of his voice, which is just insane. I feel like his music is so organic and so natural—his voice above everything else. I could listen to him sing the dictionary."

My Morning Jacket bassist Tom Blankenship adds, "The first time we met Ray, I just felt, 'Oh, right, you're one of my people.' We have the same kind of work ethic and come from a similar background. I think we're all pretty introverted, quiet guys but have learned to express ourselves through music. I've always felt that if I didn't have this opportunity, I don't know how I would express a lot of the things that I need to."

LaMontagne echoes this sentiment: "I love music; I love the art form. I feel that I was born to write songs; I was born to make music. That's my personal journey on this planet; that's how I express myself."

These kindred spirits circled over the years, discussing the possibility of touring or recording together, until, a decade after their initial meeting, LaMontagne and James finally made a commitment to collaborate in the studio.

"We blocked it out about eight or 10 months beforehand," LaMontagne says. "I was on the road for the *Supernova* record, and I decided that we were just going to make it happen because it's so difficult to get everyone's schedules to line up. But we both made a concerted effort with that conversation—'OK, this time we're going to do it. It's going to be the end of January, early February. We're going to book it now and we're going to stick to it. Whatever manager says, 'Can you guys go to Australia? Can you go do this, or do that?' We're going to say, 'No, this is happening; we're going to do it.'' That was key. I knew, in my mind, we both knew, that something was going to happen."

Exactly what that something would turn out to be was altogether unanticipated. LaMontagne had produced his fourth album at home in Massachusetts. The soulful, country-inflected *God Willin' & The Creek Don't Rise* (2010) took home the Grammy for Best Contemporary Folk Album. Four years later, he enlisted The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach to produce *Supernova*, his kaleidoscopic psych-rock follow-up, which proved to be a jolt to those people who expected him to release something in the roots-rock realm.

As LaMontagne describes it, he didn't see that he had much of a choice, as he was simply doing what he had always done: following his muse. "I had to have faith in the creative process and whatever magical thing was happening there. I think of it as a Peter Pan-type character in my subconscious. He's playful and he's very mischievous—this is the side of my personality my friends see. But, like Peter Pan, he's also a little bit touchy, so you have to let him do what he wants to do. You can't tell him what to do, you can't dictate, you can't criticize. If Peter Pan comes to you and says, 'Come play hide and seek,' you play hide and seek. If you say, 'I don't want to do that. I want to play Parcheesi or I want to play checkers, I'm not in the mood for hide and seek,' then Peter Pan will just disappear from your life and may never come back. Or you'll be an old man by the time he does. It's the same thing with creativity for me. To get the best out of myself, I have to let the mischievous, creative, playful side run with it, and just follow him and have faith in him."

A similar consideration came into play when LaMontagne was crafting the material that would become

Ouroboros. After he finished the *Supernova* tour in November 2014, LaMontagne took a few weeks to decompress and then began compiling a list of 15 songs that he identified as candidates for the new record. However, he hit a creative snag six weeks into the process, as he began working on demos of this material. "I just realized that they were resisting me," he says. "Nothing in that batch was going to come together; it didn't want to. At that point, I had maybe three and a half weeks to go before our session, and I thought, 'OK, all of this stuff is going back in the drawer, and if you've got something to give me, if you know what you want to be, tell me.' I just opened myself up to receive it. I didn't know what the record wanted to be until maybe two weeks before we were supposed to start.

"It came to me at night while I was trying to sleep. I couldn't turn my brain off because I had been thinking about music and songs for two months straight, all day. I was in that mode all the time, letting all this stuff in my subconscious stew all day and trying to grasp at these little melodic ideas and follow them. It was kind of intense, and there was a night when I was trying to sleep and it was sort of fitful and I couldn't turn my brain off. I had this dream where I was sitting at my desk and all these different pieces of melodies that I had been thinking about for weeks were sort of floating above the table in all these different colors and just sort of settled onto my desk. I see colors when I think of the dream but, at the time, I was hearing things. It all sort of came together like a puzzle. I woke up with a horrible, splitting headache, but I could see that this piece leads into this piece, which leads into this melody, which could lead into this melody and now *these* four or five pieces totally make sense and these other three or four pieces put together make sense and, when you put them together, they make a circle. That was the moment where I realized that it wasn't going to be a typical record with 10 songs and two singles; it was something else."

What it was going to be was a paean to LaMontagne's formative youthful experiences listening to vinyl. He recalls, "There are some records that after I would put them on, I would turn off the rest of the world and go on a journey. It's how I listened to records, whether it was *Blonde on Blonde* or *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Those are some of my best memories—listening to records or getting my friends together, carving out that time and doing it. It's really enjoyable—that whole experience of listening to the first side. Then, when you get to the end, everyone takes a breath and there's a moment where you get another drink or you roll a joint and then everyone is like, 'OK, are we ready? We're going back in.' It's just a big communal experience."

Beyond that general experience, LaMontagne's specific reference points for *Ouroboros* were two albums by the English new-wave band Talk Talk. Originally a synth-pop group with early-'80s singles such as "Today" and "Talk Talk," the band charted a new course with their 1988 album, *Spirit of Eden*, an atmospheric record that moves across six soundscapes. The band's 1991 follow-up, *Laughing Stock*, another seamless six-track collection, is a bit moodier and more intense than its predecessor.

Taking inspiration from all of these touchstones, LaMontagne emailed James to explain what he had in mind.

"I told him: 'This isn't going to be a record of songs, so I'm not sending you songs. I'm going to send you one song that has two parts.' Then I said, 'Have you heard Talk Talk's *Spirit of Eden* or *Laughing Stock*? It's like that but not so dark; there's more of a release in there.' I didn't know that he had heard those records. I was thinking that I was going to turn him onto them and sort of point him in the right direction. But he immediately wrote back and said, 'I just bought both those records on vinyl.' They had re-released high-definition versions. From that point on, I had a really good feeling because we both knew where it was coming from."

> "I love music; I love the art form. I feel that I was born to write songs; I was born to make music. That's my personal journey on this planet; that's how I express myself."
> **RAY LAMONTAGNE**

RAY LAMONTAGNE believes in preparation. Before he enters the studio, LaMontagne assiduously shapes a collection of songs. His starting point becomes these well-developed home demos, along with a vision for the final track listing. It is through this purposeful, focused approach that he opens himself to outside contributors.

"The reason you bring a producer in," he explains, "is because you want somebody to help you achieve what you're hearing in your head. For me, it's always textural things. I want to get these sounds and textures, or some other dimension that's missing that I can't quite put my finger on. That's why I like to have someone in there that I can bounce ideas off of, and just say, 'I'm really hearing this thing, this sort of pulsing thing that swirls and seethes and pulls you in, but I have no idea how to get that.'"

In looking back at his first five records, he expresses frustration and dismay at his inability to achieve this intent. Ethan Johns produced LaMontagne's initial three albums, *Trouble* (2004), *Till the Sun Turns Black* (2006) and *Gossip in the Grain* (2008). Since they worked together on multiple occasions, one might assume that they shared a positive working relationship, but LaMontagne demurs.

"Ethan has a very generous heart but, in my opinion, he's extremely childish and difficult to work with. My experience working with him was like butting heads with somebody for eight hours a day. But I'm a loyal friend, and we formed a friendship really early on, when I was just a pup, totally new to this world. It was a strange thing. I wasn't quite sure—'How far do I let this guy go? How far do I let this guy push me in one direction or the other?' I'd never stepped foot into a studio in my life. It was very difficult and a lot of decisions were made that I wasn't happy with.

"I tried to take a much stronger role in helping to produce the second record, *Till the Sun Turns Black*. I remember bringing in Medeski Martin & Wood, who are stunning musicians, and we were working on some things, but we were shut down by Ethan. It was a very hard record to get through. Then the third record was a disaster, and that's when I just decided that I couldn't do it anymore. What good are you going to get in the studio if you are livid all the time because every decision turns into an argument? I am chill, and so for someone to push me to that point where it brings out the New England scrapper in me, that's not fun."

This led LaMontagne to produce his fourth album at home by himself, but he found this experience wanting as well. "I worked with wonderful people—it was a nice little batch of songs. But when I hear the *God Willin'* record, I tell myself, 'Ray, you need to have that other guy in the room with you. Someone you respect and who you can talk to, can help you get things you're trying to get,' because the *God Willin'* record falls short of what I wanted."

Then, after taking a few years away from the studio, during an era in which he re-assessed his own work and his approach to it, he turned to The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach. LaMontagne had originally

LaMontagne channeling his psychedelic studio sounds with members of My Morning Jacket at Portland, Maine's Thompson's Point, 6/16/16.

Joshua Frances

contacted him after hearing the Keys' 2008 record *Attack & Release* to express his enthusiasm for the album, and that began an ongoing dialogue about some form of collaboration in the studio or live setting. The *Supernova* project started propitiously but did not end that way.

"We had great conversations on the phone," LaMontagne reflects. "But, in the studio, I realized that there was a chemistry that was going to be difficult. You've got to roll with it, and I think we did really good work, but there was a point toward the end when it got to be more tense than it should be. Again, because of me saying, 'No, that's not where I want this to go,' and Dan not taking that well. From that point onward, down to trying to get the track listing figured out, it was just butting heads when it just really didn't need to be. At a certain point, it became counterproductive."

Given the nature of the material that would become *Ouroboros*, one could imagine some trepidation on LaMontagne's part before he joined Jim James at his studio in Kentucky. However, LaMontagne professes that he went in open-eyed and optimistic, and affirms that he came out the other side with the most creatively satisfying studio experience of his life.

The My Morning Jacket frontman had both the proper temperament and tools for the gig. "One of the things that I really love about producing other people is that it's not about me," James indicates. "It's about that other person and what he wants to see. I told Ray right off the bat: 'Let's have an honest dialogue. I'm going to tell you what I think should happen, and please tell me to fuck off if you think that's not what you want to be happening, or tell me that you think that's a great idea if you think it's a great idea.' There were certainly times when he told me, 'Jim, I just don't want to do that; you have to let it go.' But, at the end of the day, he's the one who's got to live with this record. My name is on it, too, but he's got to live and die by it, so the most important thing is that he's happy. I feel like my number one job going into it was to make sure he walked out happy."

This is precisely what transpired, as LaMontagne attests: "Jim was just great. It could be because we're friends, but we hadn't spent a week together like this, in a really creatively intense situation. It was just an open flow of suggestions and comments, and he was never, ever offended when I would say no. That's beautiful because, ultimately, I needed to walk out of there saying, 'I got it. I got just what I wanted to get, thank you.' I didn't want to walk out pissed off about certain things that will bug me for the rest of my life because instead of a conversation, it was an argument. So that was what Jim offered. He wanted to serve the music; he didn't want to step all over it."

The starting point was the demos. "He just sent me two tracks that were, in essence, the two sides of the album," James recollects. "It was just so cool the way he saw the songs going together and the vision of it. It was mostly just him and his guitar, but I remember very distinctly driving that day and listening for the first time and being really moved by the music, but also by the idea of letting it be this more long-form thing."

That process began in early 2015 with a team of like-minded personnel at La La Land Studio in Louisville. LaMontagne selected Seth Kaufman, who played guitar on *Supernova,* to appear on bass, hailing his gift for textures. Jim James' longtime friends and musical

associates Dave Givan and Dan Dorff joined on drums and keyboards, respectively. LaMontagne played both electric and acoustic guitar while James contributed here and there, Kevin Ratterman supplied keys and Alexis Marsh added background vocals.

They recorded the album in order, and one early sign of success was Dorff's work on a Yamaha CP-70 during the first track of the first suite, "Homecoming." As LaMontagne remembers, "We knew we were kind of walking a fine line. You can push things too far or stack them too heavily. It became clear that the key was going to be to let us play together and leave as much space as possible. The CP-70 is not a piano, it's not an organ—it's a very unique sound, and it just added this very muted color that was really beautiful and simple. In that moment, we realized that everything we needed was right there, in the room with these players. We were not going to need to go down any rabbit holes trying to find sounds. I don't know if it's ever really happened for me before in the studio, where this defining, overall sound and texture presented itself so quickly."

Ouroboros is a Greek term most commonly associated with the circular symbol of a snake swallowing its own tail, referencing the continuous cycle of life and death. The *Ouroboros* cover art comes from Brian Stowell, who tours with LaMontagne as his merchandise manager and occupies himself during downtime with photography. After the recording was complete, LaMontagne remembered Stowell's image of a blood moon captured during the *Supernova* tour. "Once the music was done and the circular nature came back to me, I went back to that photo and looked at it and just thought about that symbol and the meaning of that symbol, and it all just felt connected to me on some level," he says.

The record builds on the sonic palette of *Supernova,* but where the earlier album gravitated a bit more to psychedelic pop, *Ouroboros* is more abstract and impressionistic. LaMontagne applies assorted brushes and a wash of hues to his canvas. He envelops the listener in a dreamy, often otherworldly atmosphere. The album may require a bit of effort for someone to enter and embrace its novel environment, but most anything worthwhile necessitates such a commitment.

As for his overall sense of the album, James explains, "It feels like a flow of seasons. In the beginning, it feels like the snow is falling and, by the end, it feels like the flowers are opening. You start in winter and wind up in spring. The way it all starts with 'Homecoming'—where we did the beautiful ending and the CP-70 just kept climbing and climbing, and the way the guitar is—just really makes me feel like I'm in the snow. Then, the way Ray ends the whole thing—'Wouldn't it make a lovely photograph?'—the way it gets to that point, you see and hear him declare how

Creating an album, not a collection of singles: James and LaMontagne explore the meaning of Ouroboros *in the studio*

he feels that they're never going to play it on the radio, but it makes a lovely photograph. I remember hearing that for the first time and thinking, 'That is so fucking awesome.' What a cool way to declare your intention. You know how it's going to be received in the world, but you don't care because, hopefully, it is a beautiful photograph you enjoy looking at and listening to. There's a certain purity of intention."

The complete final line LaMontagne sings on *Ouroboros* is: "You're never going to hear this song on the radio, but wouldn't it make a lovely photograph?" While this is a self-reflexive culmination of all that has preceded it (and likely elicits a knowing smile from the listener), it's the sort of pronouncement that gives cold comfort to record executives often fixated on far more concise expressions.

James acknowledges this reality and the concomitant pressures that LaMontagne has faced throughout his career. "I think he's had a hard time coming up by himself. A lot of times, in those situations, you don't know who to trust and you don't know what people's motives are. I've been very fortunate to be in a band where I've had other guys to talk with about things but, with Ray and other people who've come up out of the gates as a solo artist, they often don't have people to bounce things off. There are lots of voices in your ear and there are a lot of people telling you, 'You've got to do it this way. This is what's successful. You can't do that.' Making a record like this is almost the exact opposite of what they want you to do. Especially in today's single-driven market, everything is so disposable and everybody wants you to make everything as quick as you can and focuses on, 'How many tweets can you get about it?' Everything is so frantic."

On the other hand, one could make the argument that this record is ideal counter-programming. Not that LaMontagne envisioned it this way, but a record like *Ouroboros* is not only the antithesis; it may also be the antidote to this sort of thinking, as there are plenty of consumers who are looking for something more substantive and ambitious that will reverberate.

"To me, [Marvin Gaye's] *What's Going On* is the greatest of all albums ever to be done in the sense of perfect sequence, perfect instrumentation, perfect message," James adds. "Finding *Spirit of Eden* was cool; it's always cool to find a new album that's similar in regards to *What's Going On* or *Dark Side of the Moon,* some of these larger touchstone albums. But *Dark Side of the Moon* and *What's Going On* are not only artistically successful; they're two of the most commercially successful records of all time. You would think that major labels would see this and say, 'Hey, there's a way we can have both. We can let the artist be creative. We can let the artist make this wild, cool, giant piece of music, but it also can be hugely commercially successful.'"

This is the potential path of *Ouroboros.* The achievement is there; the recognition may just be a marathon that bypasses radio altogether and is dependent on touring. So given the circular reference of the album title, it is entirely fitting, and perhaps fated, that while Jim James produced the album, the four other members of My Morning Jacket will join LaMontagne as he travels the country presenting *Ouroboros* to audiences. The friendship and promises that began in 2005 are coming full circle.

"I'm so honored to be on the same stage as them. This is the highlight of my career, without a doubt," LaMontagne asserts. "The Jacket can do anything; they can be very subtle and then choose to just rocket off planet Earth into some other stratosphere, but then pull back and not get in the way of the lyrics. The *Ouroboros* piece is just beautiful with those guys—it's very rich and they're very sensitive musicians. It's also fun to put new textures to the *Supernova* material, which sounds amazing with those guys. I'm always very aware of how brief life is, and making music with these guys is just such a precious gift. Playing with them is magical and it sounds so beautiful. I hope people won't miss the opportunity to see this."

> " *Dark Side of the Moon* and *What's Going On* are not only artistically successful; they're two of the most commercially successful records of all time." **JIM JAMES**

Tom Blankenship, who rehearsed the *Ouroboros* material off and on at home for six months before taking the road with LaMontagne in June, is equally buoyant. "What impressed me the most is that it's one of those albums where you have to take the entire trip. I was immediately sucked in. The first song, 'Homecoming,' starts out with that little tic-tac bassline. It's so mesmerizing and sets the stage for the rest of the record. You immediately get pulled in and can't help but take the journey.

"This is a larger-picture thing for me. This is the first time I've been a hired gun on the road before. I've spent the past 17 years playing basslines, 95 percent of which I wrote. So for me, it's being able to step outside of my comfort zone and step into the heels of Seth Kaufman. It's been a really fun challenge because I'm kind of role-playing. I'm still myself, but I get to put on a different outfit or step into a different persona for a while and be in Ray's world."

Blankenship's favorite piece has been "Hey, No Pressure" because, as he explains, "that was the biggest challenge, rhythmically. Once we all got together, it also was the one that felt the most powerful live. It was a big thing to see Ray with that sweet voice playing these solos with his huge tone. It's crazy. It still felt like what I always do, but an alternate universe version of myself—it's multiple universes colliding."

As for LaMontagne's future as a creative artist, he references Annie Dillard (*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, Teaching a Stone to Talk, The Writing Life),* who retired from public writing a decade ago.

"I treasure her, and it's fascinating to me that she could, one day, go to her desk and see an unfinished sentence and just have this realization that: 'I don't know where this sentence is going, so this means I'm done. It's over, I'm going to do something else.' I think that's so freeing, and I feel like that's going to happen to me at some point with music.

"When I was 20 years old, I felt like I was going to write songs; I knew that was what I was going to do. I didn't know I was going to make a living out of it, but I knew that that was what I was going to do. And I also have a feeling that there will be a moment when I realize that it's time to move on to phase two and do something else and not be afraid to do that. It's important to feel at peace with change and know that it could be a healthy thing to walk away from something that's been a big part of your life—and it's not the end of your creativity, it's not the end of your happiness or fulfillment. I want to age gracefully in this career as well as life. There are very few guys who do that in the music business.

"I hope I have a long career and I hope that I can forgive myself for the first three or four records," LaMontagne continues. "For this tour, I decided that I would do a small solo set before we played the record and the *Supernova* stuff, and I've been digging into all these old songs and trying to be accepting of my younger self, who was really working hard, really studying his heroes and emulating them, yet trying to find his own voice. I feel like my work is so much better now, and I feel like what I do in the next five or 10 years is going to be even better. I feel like I've broken through a barrier over the past three or four years and, now, I'm able to make what I think are my best records."

Reviews

Compiled by MIKE GREENHAUS

Radiohead

RADIOHEAD

A Moon Shaped Pool XL

As iconoclastic as they wanna be, **Thom Yorke** and **Radiohead** long ago reached an apex where they can pretty much do whatever they want, and damn the torpedoes. It's not a stretch to call them a rotoscoped, 21st-century art-rock version of The Beatles—albeit a much more calculating and cohesive one, with years instead of months passing between albums, and each in effect defining a genre unto itself.

That certainly holds true for *A Moon Shaped Pool*, which dropped like a stun grenade on May 8, just after the band wiped its website and social feeds clean, and premiered the *Wicker Man*-themed, stop-motion animated video for the eerie leadoff track "Burn the Witch." Right off the bat, the propulsive string melodies (arranged by **Jonny Greenwood** and performed by the **London Contemporary Orchestra**) define a thread that weaves its way throughout the album, providing a lush counterpoint to Yorke's all-hope-is-lost lyrics and producer **Nigel Godrich**'s heady, deep-space atmospherics.

"Burn the Witch" is also one of several songs with a deep history. The oldest, "True Love Waits," dates back to 1995; Yorke plays the song solo, with acoustic guitar, on the band's 2001 live album *I Might Be Wrong*. The studio version switches to piano, which at first seems to muffle the song's immediacy, but then somehow glues itself to Yorke's intent when he's singing, in much the same voice he had 15 years ago, lines like "And true love waits in haunted attics/ And true love lives on lollipops and crisps."

It's one of the advantages of having 20-plus years of repertoire to fall back on. Two more, "Desert Island Disk" and "The Numbers," take on a pastoral folk sheen that calls up Bert Jansch, Yes and *Led Zeppelin III*, but once again, it's the swirling eddies of sound (the distant Mellotron on "Desert Island Disk," the strings on "The Numbers") and the precision-controlled anguish of Yorke's voice that transport each number to unusual new territory, at least for Radiohead.

It's this unchecked hunger to try something new, even if some of the tools are less so ("Decks Dark," with its spacey nod to vintage trip-hop, stands out for Greenwood's choral charts alone), that keeps Yorke and company ahead of the curve. For a band that's been in the trenches this long to be able to remain musically vital—and for that matter, to be able to ensure a wave of excitement that borders on hysteria with each new project—is a testament to their collective dedication and connection to their craft. It doesn't come along very often. ***Bill Murphy***

Bob Dylan

Fallen Angels COLUMBIA

If there was any doubt that **Bob Dylan** was serious about interpreting chestnuts from the Great American Songbook, then *Fallen Angels*, his follow-up to last year's *Shadows in the Night*, puts that to rest. As on the predecessor, here, he digs into pre-rock standards penned by the likes of Jimmy Van Heusen and Sammy Cahn, Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer, Hoagy Carmichael and others of their ilk with the same relish he works up for a vintage blues. Dylan is all about the *song*–the honest delivery of a meaningful lyric, whether it's one he's written or not–and it isn't surprising that he's now chosen to mine this rich vein of American music. Some may still carp that he has no right, with that throaty rasp of his, to move into Sinatra territory, but he's not trying to be Sinatra–it's just another side of Bob Dylan. He's arguably less convincing this time around though. Dylan's love for the melodies and sentiments of classics like "All the Way," "Skylark" and "That Old Black Magic" is undeniably pure–you can feel it in the spirited arrangements, sweet and swinging, melancholy, yearning and raw. Steel guitarist **Donnie Herron**, in particular, brings these tunes to another place all together, far from their comfort zones. Yet, from the beginning, the 1953 Sinatra-associated composition "Young at Heart," there's often an aloofness–a carelessness–in Dylan's voicings that was absent on *Shadows of the Night*. His phrasing is less nuanced, his joy tempered. It's still a fine work, but *Fallen Angels* feels like a volume two, not the striking, exciting revelation that arrived a year before. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

The Chris Robinson Brotherhood

Anyway You Love, We Know How You Feel SILVER ARROW

Where previous **Chris Robinson Brotherhood** albums have felt like scrappy dust-ups of early R&B with Bakersfield country and organic psychedelia, *Anyway You Love* has the feel of the 1970s. The CRB was built for Gestalt–for group mind. With drummer **Tony Leone** newly aboard and bassist **Ted Pecchio** subbing, that Gestalt is in flux. This transitional lineup is experimenting with a new fusion, both a light funk and a rootsier folk rock. These two modes alternate across the record, woven together by textures and tones that are CRB signatures, and becoming, at times, a sort of psychedelic soul music. The opening track "Narcissus Soaking Wet" feels like a hybrid of Angeleno funk with the Sausalito style (Stevie Wonder at The Record Plant), while keyboardist **Adam MacDougall** employs a Worrell-inspired Parliafunkadelickery. Yet "Forever As the Moon" opens with piano and acoustic guitar. It's an epic poem, Robinson's imagery and phrasing foreboding, the backing vocals cataclysmic. We also taste the electro-prog that Robinson has suggested would be this band's evolution: On "Give Us Back Our Eleven Days," **Neal Casal**'s guitar leads squeal over Leone's complex drumline and a simple, dark progression of guitar and bass, while Robinson's soul shoutings wash in as background noise. Then, "California Hymn" is a cross-country nod to The Band, MacDougall's clavinet a wink at Richard Manuel. It's also a circling back to The Black Crowes' *Before The Frost... Until the Freeze*–perhaps with Robinson remembering what he'd been up to before that rig came tumbling into this one. ***Richard B. Simon***

Neil Young + Promise of the Real

EARTH REPRISE

From *Harvest* to Farm Aid to the anthemic "Who's Gonna Stand Up?" (the standout on 2014's *Storytone*), **Neil Young** has kept a closeness to the land and to the hard-working life that somehow still remains separate from his more politicized view of environmental issues; very rarely do the two come together. In its entirety, *Earth* is a forum for just that union, featuring live renditions of songs from Young's vast catalog, but focusing primarily on *Ragged Glory* and last year's scathing indictment, *The Monsanto Years*. Mixed with field-recorded sounds from nature (howling coyotes, buzzing insects, cackling crows) and the bustling city, the music comes across as an amped-up collage with a palpable, searingly electric sense of adventure. Most of that begins with the youthful exuberance of **Micah** and **Lukas Nelson** (sons of Willie), whose band **Promise of the Real** breathes fire into classics like "Vampire Blues" and the previously unreleased gem "Seed Justice"–but Young still brings the power, as his wrenching take on "After the Gold Rush" proves almost from the start, eliciting ecstatic cheers from a devoted crowd that's with him every step of the way. For a guy who's supposed to be in the twilight of his career, Young actually seems to be getting younger. ***Bill Murphy***

Paul Simon

Stranger to Stranger CONCORD

Paul Simon isn't the most prolific of artists–this is only his 13th solo album since he and Art Garfunkel called it quits in 1970. He takes his time because repetition is anathema to him: Exploring new rhythmic routes, fashioning stories yet to be told, finding the right sounds and the people to invent them and honing his expression, he chips away in the studio, endeavoring to make each album count. That said, *Stranger to Stranger* often feels like a holding pattern, instead of the great leaps forward that were *Graceland* and *The Rhythm of the Saints*. Of course, it's impeccably crafted from the ground up: "The Werewolf," the opener, is a polyrhythmic, wry meditation on death, survival and lesser things, juxtaposing slide guitar, a full horn section, **Clap! Clap!**'s beats and loops, and a deliberately cool and subdued Simon delivery. But "Wristband," up next, is a toss-away trifle, and so it goes throughout, alternately brilliant, precious, insightful and sometimes too, too clever. Produced by **Roy Halee**, the now-80-something former S&G helmsman, *Stranger to Stranger* is, at

Paul Simon

times, also surprisingly overfamiliar: "Cool Papa Bell" isn't so much a tribute to the late Negro Baseball League superstar (billed as "the fastest man on Earth," as Simon acknowledges) as a calculated opportunity to revisit the African instrumentation and rhythms Simon so loves, and "In a Parade" is little more than a pile of drum sounds over which he largely recites a single line ("I can't talk now, I'm in a parade") ad infinitum, surrounded by silliness. When he does hit it though, as on the impeccable, big-hearted title track and the album-closing ballad "Insomniac's Lullaby" (featuring jazz drum legend **Jack DeJohnette** and background vocals from **Bobby McFerrin**, alongside a collection of rare instruments), sung in that voice that hasn't aged a day, it's a quick reminder that Paul Simon remains one of our living treasures. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

The Claypool Lennon Delirium

Monolith of Phobos ATO

"The world's on the brink," **Sean Lennon** warns in a twinkling waltz cadence, backed by **Les Claypool**'s slap-bass convulsions. "But that's just what the devil wants you to think/ Never stop shopping, don't ever give in/ 'cause if we stop shopping, the terrorists win." It would be the funniest rock lyric of the year, if it were the funniest lyric in the song. "Ohmerica," a side-splitting, psychedelic condemnation of Bible-thumping, drone-friendly America, is the centerpiece of the duo's collaborative debut LP. (That funniest lyric? "You think George Washington evolved from an ape?/ You should be locked up in the 51st state.") Throughout 51 batshit goofy minutes, Lennon and Claypool trade hooks, riffs and jokes with an offhand charm that would border on spontaneous were it not for the intricate musicianship on display: Claypool's funk-finger bass work remains a band unto itself, propelling the demented peeping tom tale "Mr. Wright" and creepy-crawly "Breath of a Salesman." Lennon's plodding, primal drumming adds menace to the title track's proto-Floyd buzz and the ragged psych lurch of "Boomerang Baby." The true surprise is his versatile guitar work, a bevy of wah-wah pedal fireworks and guttural fuzz. Monkeys, OxyContin junkies, insects and astronauts: Claypool and Lennon run the gamut of subject matter on *Phobos*. And they make it all sound heady and hilarious. ***Ryan Reed***

Ziggy Marley

Ziggy Marley TUFF GONG

Strange as it seems, **Ziggy Marley** has been recording for more years than his father ever did–over three decades now. This self-titled effort is only his sixth solo album though, all of them following the several he made with his group The Melody Makers in the '80s and '90s. What's immediately striking about each new Ziggy Marley release–and this one isn't an exception–is its familiarity. It's a comforting, feel-good sound. Marley long ago forged his own style and purpose, eschewing trends that have come and gone–he's always stayed true to his roots–yet he is also well aware that he is carrying on a cherished legacy and takes great care to honor it. As has always been his preference, this latest set is stocked with anthems, some addressing topical, contemporary themes ("We are the people, we're not corporations," starts off "We Are the People"), others are more universal or personal ("Better Together," "Amen"), and each track is accessible and lean in structure. Self-produced, *Ziggy Marley* finds the artist in particularly strong, commanding voice and leading a group of musicians who know innately how to serve him well. On "Weekend's Long," the first single from the album, keyboard spurts mimicking steel drums fill in around Marley's vocal lines as the rhythm section, never deviating, provides an immovable platform from which the singer can emote to his heart's content. For others, it might have turned out trite; here, it's a winning, age-old combination of elements that asks for nothing more complicated than the listener's love for unsullied, honest reggae music. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Band of Horses

Why Are You OK

INTERSCOPE/AMERICAN

When **Band of Horses** broke with their 2006 debut, *Everything All the Time*, the appeal was two-fold: The band twirled good ol' Southern rock with an ethereal, otherworldly vibe. The group's third and

Reviews

fourth records (most recently, 2012's *Mirage Rock*) were less adored because the rock existed plainly here on earth, not floating above it. Thankfully, *Why Are You OK* finds Band of Horses back where they belong—here are 12 gorgeous tracks swathed in a far-off atmosphere. And while there are few tracks that are quite as arresting as, say, "The Funeral," *Why Are You OK* is easily the act's best work in a decade. As always, **Ben Bridwell**'s daydream vocals take center stage; within the first 60 seconds of seven-minute opener "Dull Times/The Moon," his melody breaks into a wave of fragmented echoes and goosebump-worthy harmonies. Produced by Grandaddy's **Jason Lytle**, *Why Are You OK* sounds great—all earthy percussion, twinkling guitars and rumbling bass. The band capitalizes on ghostly music paired with Bridwell's painfully human lyrics. "Are we really in love, completely in love? Did mentioning it make your skin start to crawl?" he sings on the beautiful "Hag." Fans may have asked *Why Are You OK* to Band of Horses' last few albums, but they'll be rightfully fawning over this one. ***Justin Jacobs***

The New Mastersounds
The Nashville Session
THE ROYAL POTATO FAMILY

British retro soul-funk powerhouse quartet **The New Mastersounds** chase the lightning-in-a-bottle approach on *The Nashville Session*, a single-take performance cut live to tape in front of a small (and inaudible) studio audience. The release is only available as a limited edition vinyl of 1,000. The approach allows the quartet to settle into an airtight funktet sound that's as free as ever—zipping through mostly older tunes from their early days, an alternate take on the title track from last year's *Made for Pleasure* and a lone cover. An overarching vintage sonic texture makes these freewheeling sounds breathe as if they were baked under a set of warm stage lights. Organ runs, riffs and drum fills bubble across the channels. **Eddie Roberts**' slick and

Ear Crystals BY RICHARD GEHR
The search for other-world audio gems

Killing Time. *In Time* (Beyond Beyond Is Beyond) is the third album of interstellar psych-jazz by Dungen guitarist **Mattias Gustavsson**'s 15-piece big ensemble, **Our Solar System**. Time is of the essence on this record-calibrated release consisting of two vinyl-side-long tracks. "In the Beginning of Time" kicks in with a saxophone solo before setting its controls for the heart of the sun and explodes into an orgasmic frenzy before returning to nothingness. "At the Edge of Time" begins with motorik drums, echoing guitars and a single-note bass vamp. Italian spaghetti-Western female vocals declare their mantra before everything breaks down into a dubby lost-in-the-spaceways riddle of synths and hand percussion until time's up.

Buying time. **Carla Bley**, one of the world's greatest jazz composers, turned 80 in May. The pianist celebrated by releasing *Andando el Tiempo* (ECM) with her bassist partner, **Steve Swallow** and saxophonist **Andy Sheppard**. The record feels both quietly celebratory and darkly autumnal, due largely to its opening title suite, a three-part instrumental reflection on addiction and recovery. Bley's subtle melodies linger like memories in the listening. Her spare piano style is a thing of wonder, as are Swallow's elegantly reflective electric-bass solos. Shepard's lyrical saxophone is almost an afterthought, the reflections of the world eavesdropping on an intimate conversation.

Time saver. Guitarists **Henry Kaiser** and **Alan Licht's** delicious and delirious *Skip to the Solo* (Public Eyesore) takes sophisticated guitar exhibitionism to the outer limits. Both a clever homage to Frank Zappa's *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar* and a thoroughly entertaining improv-rock banquet in its own right, *Skip to the Solo* omits heads, choruses and verses to get right to the self-expressive nitty-gritty. Licht, Kaiser, and guitarist/bassist **Mikko Biffle** share generous solo space in tracks like "More or Less Cowbell," "Variations on the Jerry Garcia Secret Chord Progression" (smells like "Fire on the Mountain" to me) and "Ask Me About the Dorian Mode." Guitar geek must-have of the year.

Doing time. **Tim Heidecker**, of *Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!* fame, plays it relatively straight on his solo rock-dude debut, *In Glendale* (Rado). Like Randy Newman, Harry Nilsson, or my favorite new story-songer Benjamin Dean Wilson (check out *Small Talk!*), it's funny as shit and truer than true at the same time. Heidecker addresses hangovers ("Work From Home"), money troubles ("When the Cash Runs Out") and parenting ("I'm cleanin' up the dog shit, cleanin' up the baby shit/ Hey, on my weekend now!") in companionable mid-tempo tracks suggesting he's no less damaged than the next working dude.

Quality time. In general, I'd rather get a colonoscopy than listen to a harmonica, but Hazmat Modine bandleader **Wade Schuman** makes the instrument an organic part of his wonderful Americana-meets-Tuva outfit. Hazmat's third album, *Extra-Deluxe-Supreme* (Barbès), is a classy adventure in quality songwriting and horn-driven arrangements spiced up by the Tuvans' otherworldly vocal overtones. "Plans" could be a lost gem from the Allen Toussaint songbook, "Your Sister" is a soulful and sexy romp through awkward friendship moments, and "Whiskey Bird" is a warm and heady exploration of a yet-to-be-discovered subgenre, Delta reggae.

burning guitar vicissitudes on "Coming Up Roses" cut like a knife, exuding an unflappable control and adventurous nature that his bandmates continue to ably match throughout the record. "The Minx" is a thick and loose funk jam that reminds the listener of the sheer joy that a live New Mastersounds gig can engender in an audience. Organ player **Joe Tatton** flexes his muscles, weaving a melodically complex tapestry on "Carrot Juice" and leading a charge with Roberts, **Pete Shand** and **Simon Allen** following through in lockstep. The record exudes confidence, feels raw and unfettered, yet, despite being cut live, has nary a lack in overall polish. A late-record highlight is a reading of Grant Green's arrangement of James Brown's "In the Middle," the climax of this essential introduction to The New Mastersounds. ***Wesley Hodges***

Bruce Hornsby & The Noisemakers

Rehab Reunion 429

For anyone who's followed **Bruce Hornsby**'s long career, a read through the liner notes (or iTunes description) of *Rehab Reunion*, his new album with **The Noisemakers**, may leave the impression that something is missing. Indeed, there isn't a piano to be found on the record, as Hornsby leads the charge through 10 new tracks strumming an Appalachian dulcimer. The result is fresh, fun and folky—the sound of a veteran songwriter finding brand new energy, and laying that lightning down on wax. Hornsby, a self-described beginner on the dulcimer, calls the record his "punk moment," but the relative simplicity of the music is its strength. Most of the tunes on *Rehab Reunion* present perfect pop-rock songwriting: joyous, sing-along choruses, clever lyrics and free-and-easy musicianship. "Celestial Railroad" is pure positivity, with Hornsby and the legendary **Mavis Staples** declaring, "We gonna take a ride" over a breezy, soulful groove. The gorgeous, subdued "Over the Rise" features Bon Iver's **Justin Vernon** singing falsetto. As a lyricist, Hornsby's very human writing perfectly matches the warm, flowing music. He occasionally gets too cute, like in the chorus of "Tipping" ("Five or 10 percent's too cheap; 20 percent is too steep; don't know how to get to 15 percent"), but his storytelling is largely captivating. On the title track, he's "nervous as a cat, called my sponsor three times" when encountering former rehab buddies. On the beautiful "Soon Enough," he's a troubled teen "raising hell across the state." Nearly four decades on, Hornsby proves that he's still got some wonderful tricks up his sleeve. ***Justin Jacobs***

Dave King Trucking Company

Surrounded By the Night SUNNYSIDE

Dave King is best known as the drummer of The Bad Plus, one of the most forward-pointing groups in jazz today. But he's one restless dude and, whenever that trio is on a break, he can be found moonlighting with any of several other Minnesota-based outfits, most notably Happy Apple and this, his own vanity collective. *Surrounded By the Night* is the third release by the **Dave King Trucking Company**, which now consists of King on drums (and cymbals, the liner notes make sure to point out), guitarist **Erik Fratzke**, tenor saxophonists **Brandon Wozniak** and **Chris Speed** (who doubles on clarinet), and the newest addition, bassist **Chris Morrissey**. It's a winning mix of musical personalities—the saxes, when working in tandem, often head off in divergent directions yet cling tightly to a melodic core that keeps the song from getting lost. "Delta Kreme," the opener, is a sweet ballad that finds King—who wrote all seven tracks—brushing unhurriedly, the saxophones exploring in counterpoint while Fratzke and Morrissey stick largely to support roles. But when they're all fired up—as they are on "You Should Be Watching (Art) Films" and the closer, "Don't Be Suspect of a Gift"—that's when things get really fun, with Fratzke attaining near-skronk out-there-ness and the others, King especially, giddily holding nothing back. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Snarky Puppy

Culcha Vulcha GROUNDUP/UME

In an era where pristine live recordings are frequently included with the price of admission to a show, it's all the more impressive that **Snarky Puppy** has managed to earn a pair of Grammys for recordings made in front of an audience, a habit they've maintained for eight years. Now though, close on the heels of their latest *Family Dinner* installment, they've decided to drop a proper studio album. The biggest difference is the lack of applause between the tracks, as *Culcha Vulcha* otherwise demonstrates that the multitude of players in the Puppy family can deliver excellence no matter how many people are watching. And the compositions display a similar level of precision to their live counterparts, albeit with more reverb and stereo panning. There are some nice moments where the band really takes advantage of the benefits inherent to working in a dedicated recording environment—in particular, the double-drumming of **Robert "Sput" Searight** and **Larnell Lewis** on **Justin Stanton**'s tune "Gemini"—but apart from that, the album

1 Cold Roses

"Staying Alive Ain't Easy"
From the Album *Escape to Anywhere*
Recorded Records

Cold Roses is a Philadelphia-based rock band that explores the spectrum of alternative music and American rock and roll. The band consists of founder-songwriter Rob Clancy on guitar and lead vocals, keyboard player Alex Ayala, bass player Matt Keppler, drummer Robby Webb, Tom Petraccaro on sax and Rick Rein on trumpet.

www.recordedrecords.com

2 Jonah Smith

"Turn Down the Moon"
From the album *Easy Prey*
Music Road Records

Some people are content to stay rooted in one place for their entire lives. Singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Jonah Smith is not one of them. "Every once in a while, I like to be somewhere new," says Smith, who migrated to Los Angeles in 2013 after spending most of his life in the snowbelt states of New York and Vermont. That statement could also apply to his music, which seems to cover sonic territory so vast that trying to label it turns into a hunt for elusive adjectives. The truth is, we could use a few new ones to fully convey the landscapes depicted on his Music Road Records debut, Easy Prey (May 20, 2016). Traversing terrain where blues and soul intersect with traditional folk, Smith uses familiar reference points, but leads us to places we haven't been before.

www.musicroadrecords.com/artist/jonah-smith

3 Walker Adams

"Plains"
From the album *Till Now*
Self-released

Enticing the mind and compelling the booty, the Walker Adams Project plays innovative dance music that fuses funk, jazz and electronica. Berklee grad and former St. Vincent drummer Walker Adams leads this group of NYC jazz musicians whose new EP streams free at walkeradams.com. Follow @walkeradamsmusic on Facebook, Instagram and Youtube.

www.walkeradams.com

4 Nick Moss Band

"Catch Me I'm Falling"
From the album *From the Root to the Fruit*
Blue Bella Records

NMB's new double-disc studio album reaches back to his early days playing Chicago blues as an apprentice to the legends on disc one, while simultaneously building on the improvisational, rock-influenced efforts of his most recent work on disc two. Exciting vocalist Michael Ledbetter lends his talents throughout.

www.nickmossband.com

5 Josh Hoyer & Soul Colossal

"The Evening Train"
From the album *Running from Love*
Silver Street Records

"If James Brown and Otis Redding had a love child, it would be Josh Hoyer. The Lincoln, Nebraska, soul shouter, and his band of merry soulsters, Soul Colossal, deliver a sound so big, so funky, so wring-the-sweat-out-of-you energetic that it reaches through the speakers and shakes you until you start moving to its groove" (No Depression).

www.joshhoyer.com/blog

6 The Travelin' Hillbillies

"All in Good Company"
From the album *The Travelin' Hillbillies*
Self-released

Hailing from the Shenandoah Valley, The Travelin' Hillbillies is comprised of four tight and experienced musicians who have developed a style that is uniquely their own. The band is set apart by sweet Southern rock tunes that include hints of bluegrass, rock and roll, folk, blues and country. Their three-part harmonies have been compared to groups such as The Eagles and Crosby, Stills & Nash. The heart of the group is derived from the Garst family, which includes brothers, Ryan, Shay and Brandon, who have been playing music together since they were old enough to pick up instruments. In just four short years, they have played over 500 shows and venues while holding full-time jobs. With their recent release of "All in Good Company," engineered by Brian Craddock and Produced by Jake Dempsey, The Travelin' Hillbillies are slowly climbing up the family band ladder while staying passionate about playing their instruments.

www.facebook.com/travelinhillbillies

Feature.FM Spotlight: Hollis Brown

7

"Wait for Me Virginia"
From the album *3 Shots*
Alive Naturalsound Records

Hollis Brown is an American rock 'n' roll band. Named after a Bob Dylan song, the edgy, roots-rock indie group from Queens, N.Y., is notorious for its adrenaline-fueled performances. In 2015, they released their third album, 3 Shots (Jullian Records/RED), and joined Counting Crows and Citizen Cope for an extensive American tour.

www.hollisbrown.com

8 9 Horses

"Monochrome Shoe #2"
From the album *Perfectest Herald*
Sunnyside Records

9 Horses is an innovative and eclectic consortium of virtuoso instrumentalists from several genres. The core group consists of Joe Brent on mandolin (Regina Spektor), Sara Caswell on violin (Esperanza Spalding) and Shawn Conley on bass (Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble). "Completely enveloping… these tracks are among the most life-affirming one will ever hear."

www.josephbrent.com/9horses

9 Harry's Code

"Freennocent"
From the album *In the Color Wheel*
Cow Co. Music

Harry's Code was crafted by Harry Clark as a rocking, melting pot of musical influences and life experiences. In the Color Wheel is the band's first album and "Freennocent" its debut single, the warm oil painting flowing through the entire record. Each song is a tale drawn with different and colored atmospheres into Harry's blank canvas.

www.harryscode.wix.com/harryscode

10 Editor's Pick: Ray LaMontagne

"The Changing Man"
From the album *Ouroboros*
Sony Music Entertainment

Ten years ago, Ray LaMontagne released his first album, TROUBLE, the gold-certified start to a fiercely ambitious, Grammy Award-winning, critically praised career that's encompassed three more albums, several EPs, a slew of soundtrack compilations and arresting live performances fronting a variety of ensembles.

www.raylamontagne.com

11 JamOFF! Winner: Ceekay Jones

"Life Line"
From the EP *Ceekay Jones*
Redor Records

Singer/Songwriter Ceekay Jones describes his sound as "Southern Urban Soul" and it definitely invokes touches in such genres; his vocals and melodic flow show the connection to Southern blues and early '90s hip-hop stylings, while his lyrics reveal his vast ability to pull from both his own life story as well as the world around him.

www.ceekayjones.com

largely relies on the same tropes that have driven all their previous efforts. (There's New Orleans-style funk, an Afrobeat-tinged tune and the requisite epic **Cory Henry** synth solo.) For better or worse, as always, no matter the environment, Snarky Puppy sounds like Snarky Puppy. ***Wayan Zoey***

Pat Metheny
The Unity Sessions NONESUCH

Pat Metheny + Cuong Vu Trio
Cuong Vu Trio Meets Pat Metheny

NONESUCH

Among the many things at which he excels, not repeating himself is a biggie for **Pat Metheny**. Throughout his four-decade career, the guitarist has made a point of pushing himself, recording in a plethora of different situations with an ever-revolving cast of support players. But there have been constants, and these two simultaneous releases are about catching up as much as moving ahead. *The Unity Sessions* is the audio companion to a performance previously released on video and featuring Metheny accompanied by bassist **Ben Williams**, drummer **Antonio Sanchez** and saxophonist **Chris Potter**. Prior to the 2012 release of the *Unity Band* album and the 2014 album *KIN (<--->)* by the renamed **Pat Metheny Unity Group** (now featuring multi-instrumentalist **Giulio Carmassi**), it had been three decades since Metheny had worked with a saxist, and the new configuration has opened him up to ideas previously uncharted. The double-disc *The Unity Sessions* is more of a summation than a groundbreaker though, and while the group is particularly impressive and inquisitive on expansive numbers like "Come and See" and "Rise Up," there isn't much in the way of surprises if one is familiar with the two studio releases. Metheny is more of a guest than integral component of *Cuong Vu Trio Meets Pat Metheny*. Trumpeter **Cuong Vu** is a longtime contributor to Metheny projects and, here, he and his trio (**Stomu Takeishi**, bass; **Ted Poor**, drums), plus visitors, engage in a seven-track set that ranges from experimental to brutal to quasi-fusion to surprisingly placid. Metheny shines on "Telescope," a free-rolling jam that builds in intensity, and "Tune Blues," another track with a loosely defined structure that affords him free rein to wail as he sees fit. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Sam Cohen
Cool It 30TH CENTURY

Dreamy tempos and dreamy guitar tones can lull you into a false sense of calm and then erupt into a heavy electric presence on producer, guitarist and songwriter **Sam Cohen**'s solo debut (which has now been released on Danger Mouse's label). Cohen, a founding member of Apollo Sunshine and Yellowbirds, has worked with Bob Weir and Cass McCombs, and he was a member of the house band on the recent massive *Day of the Dead* tribute album. Cohen also produced the most recent record by Kevin Morby, which this record brings to mind, as if *Cool It* were its more jubilant

Sam Cohen

cousin. The DNA of Neil Young's "Down By the River" curls through a few of Cohen's songs here, even if the production is much more elaborate than Neil's rough-hewn approach. This is psychedelic pop, produced with a surprising punch, conveyed with heavy fuzz, swelling synths, loads of tremolo, handclaps and flickering organ backgrounds. Cohen likes to toggle between three-beat and four-beat sections within the same song—a very Beatles-y move. It's a close-listen kind of record, with curious stereo separation of the drums and intricate ear-catching interplay between guitar and keyboard in places. Elsewhere, slapback echo on the snare drum creates its own strange call-and-response effect. It's rare to hear an album that's both so trippy and so impeccable-sounding. Many tracks, like "A Farewell to Arms," require at least two listens, one for the complexity of the production and another for the subtlety of the songwriting. ***John Adamian***

Cult of Luna & Julie Christmas
Mariner INDIE

With *Mariner*, Sweden's **Cult of Luna** dramatically shifts gears, enlisting the vocals of **Julie Christmas**, known best for her previous bands, Battle of Mice and Made Out of Babies. While drastically altering its vocal dynamics is a bold move, it's the perfect next step in the quintet's (sextet, including Christmas) remarkable career. This new alteration to the band's blueprint—seven albums and 18 years in—has Christmas at the forefront, enmeshing her voice with the staccato, screaming-forward style of vocalist/guitarist **Johannes Persson**. Christmas' brooding, frenetic style—gun wrenching one moment, borderline angelic the next—fits into these new C.O.L. arrangements magnificently. "A Greater Call" opens the album appropriately, unveiling the dual vocals slowly, and blending the beautifully clean guitar lines, meandering melodies, precise drumming and orchestral vision that have become well-known band signatures. "Cygnus," the fifth and final track, showcases the carefully arranged, synth-laden, shoegazing beauty Cult of Luna is so masterful at crafting. It is perhaps here that the sheer, crackling intensity that Christmas and Persson's vocals can collectively gather is realized. *Mariner* peaks at its literal conclusion, as the spectacular crescendo "Cygnus" unleashes for about five of the song's nearly 15 minutes and almost reaches true sonic perfection. ***Mike Thomas***

You Won't
Revolutionaries

EXTRANEOUS MUSIC/MEDDLING KIDS

Boston duo **You Won't** introduced themselves to the world with their 2012 debut, *Skeptic Goodbye*, a collection of concise tunes that showcased the band's winning formula: frontman **Josh Arnoudse**'s pointed, poignant lyrics, matched with a penchant for bouncy rhythms and just enough bursts of earworm choruses. Their sophomore effort, *Revolutionaries*, probably took longer to realize than they had hoped, but the result is a deeper, fuller sound that has upped the ante in the earworm department without skimping on the lyrics. In the third chorus of lead single "Ya Ya Ya," Arnoudse sings in his winsomely nasal voice: "You say your body is a bad punchline/ You're sick of feeling like a beast after a bombing/ Baby, take a look at me sometime/ Let me add a little yodel to your yawning." A surprisingly solid turn of phrase for a tune whose chorus—ridiculously catchy as it is—basically consists of the same syllable repeated about 18 times. Arnoudse's counterpart, multi-instrumentalist **Raky Sastri**, is the caulk that binds the project together, filling in the cracks in Arnoudse's architecture with clattering drums, dancing basslines, inspired keyboard sounds, electric bagpipes and even a singing saw. The result is a rich overall sound that is much bigger than one would expect from the unassuming pair. ***Matt Inman***

Jack DeJohnette/Ravi Coltrane/Matthew Garrison
In Movement ECM

You go into it knowing the connections: Saxophonist **Ravi Coltrane**, 50, and bassist **Matthew Garrison**, 46, are the sons, respectively, of John Coltrane and Jimmy Garrison, who played the same instruments as their offspring in one of jazz's most game-changing quartets. Drummer **Jack DeJohnette**, who is now 73 and played a handful of times with John Coltrane, introduced the two sons and encouraged them to create together. *In Movement* is the first time the trio has recorded, and it both embraces the musicians' shared legacy and takes pains to transcend it. They honor the past immediately, opening with a doleful, exploratory take on the elder Coltrane's "Alabama." It doesn't so much meander as it unfolds at a measured pace, establishing the rapport among the three players. If the trio is nominally led by DeJohnette—and his seniority should grant him that—then the drummer earns his status on tracks like the funky but minimal "Serpentine Fire" and, especially, "Rashied," a nod to the late Rashied Ali, the senior Coltrane's drummer of choice toward the end of his life. One other cover must be acknowledged though: Miles Davis' "Blue in Green" features DeJohnette (who played with Miles) on piano, no drums in sight; enchanting and pristine, it suggests other directions this trio might choose to take should they meet again. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

David Adams
Bounce Classic SELF-RELEASED

Saxophonist **David Adams** is best known as a member of the Boston funk outfit Addison Groove Project, who were a staple of the East Coast jam scene after forming in high school in the late '90s and who played with musicians like Trey Anastasio, Maceo Parker, Marco Benevento and more before calling it quits in 2007 (minus a few ensuing reunion performances). Adams' *Bounce Classic*, which came together thanks, in part, to a Kickstarter campaign, is a solo effort in name only; he is joined on the record by a bevy of funky friends, including AGP's keyboardist **Rob Marscher** and other frequent collaborators of the band, who help Adams (on alto saxophone and flute) realize his ambitious compositions that are fully rooted in the traditions of funk and jazz. Album opener "Rocks" lays down a solid foundation of funky drums and lightly staccato guitar with a lyrical horn-section line on top, supported by smooth organ, setting the tone for what's to come. The following tune, "Meteorite," points directly to the work of jazz-funk legend Herbie Hancock with its mixture of tight horn lines and liquid keyboards, while other tracks like "Boombox" have a slightly more modern, almost Lettuce-esque attack to them. ***Matt Inman***

Mothers
When You Walk a Long Distance You Are Tired GRAND JURY/WICHITA

Kristine Leschper's lethargic vocals belie an insurgent stance. It's one that her Georgia-based band freely affirms. **Mothers** ought not be confused with the Frank Zappa outfit of (nearly) the same name, but their willingness to play with the parameters of their forlorn folk approach might suggest some kind of distant kinship—distant, as in far removed. Despite its long-winded handle, the musical trappings that underscore the band's eight-song debut are limited, although a healthy helping of ethereal

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ChillHarris
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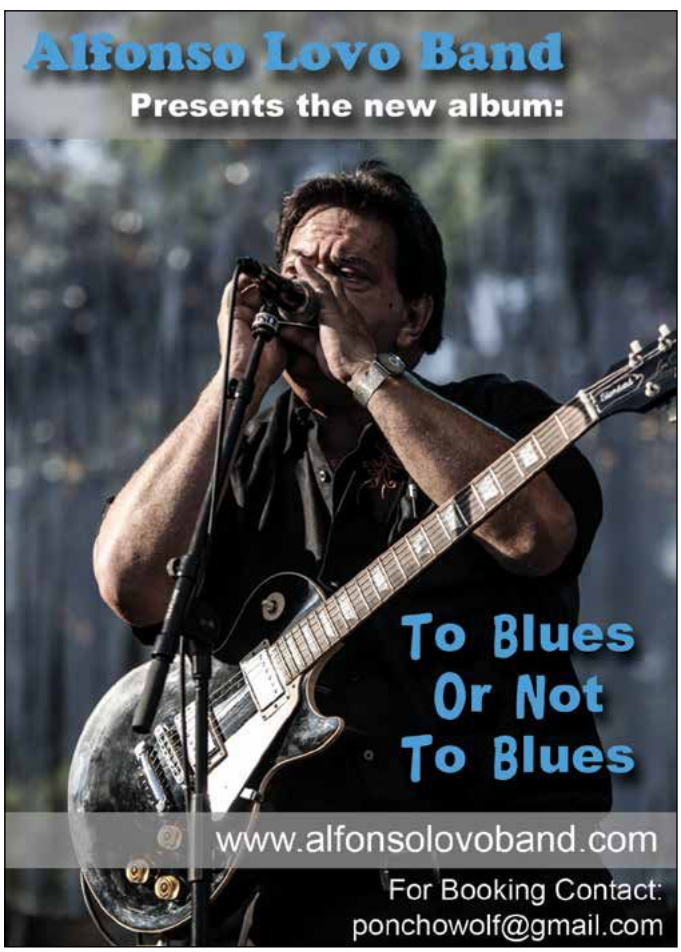


Reviews

ambiance provides their defining element. It finds songs such as "Too Small for Eyes," "Nesting Behavior" and "Hold Your Own Hand" drifting along complacently, with occasional turbulence springing up from below the surface. The band–Leschper, drummer **Matthew Anderegg**, guitarist **Drew Kirby** and bassist **Patrick Morales**–lack a true shoegaze sound, but given the spare settings and the twilight trappings, the comparison works better than most. "It Hurts Until It Doesn't" and the lilting "Copper Mines" pick up the pace, but only slightly–barely enough to provide a break from these otherwise somber settings. Best suited as a soundtrack for a mellow morning after, the weariness implied in the title is immediately evident. Hopefully, the next outing will prove less taxing.
Lee Zimmerman

Megafauna
Welcome Home SELF-RELEASED

"I've got a secret for you," **Dani Neff** teases over the deep-cosmos throb of "Keep Learning the Same Thing." Spoken like a true mystic. *Welcome Home*, **Megafauna**'s fourth LP, finds the Austin heavy-psych trio plunging deeper than ever into the ethereal. The wicked rhythms of bassist **Will Krause** and drummer **Zack Humphrey** often veer toward Sabbath-styled proto-metal, and Neff–the band's singer, guitarist and chief songwriter–follows suit with brutal distortion on barnburner mini-epics like "Panpsychist." Megafauna stroke that sludgy sweet spot throughout while never sacrificing dynamics or tonal variety. The songs ebb and flow between brute force and serenity, building stoned atmospheres laced with hellfire. "Gaia" exemplifies the contrast, as coiling blues-rock riffs collide with feathery, delayed arpeggios; "Desire" lurches around in a fog later punctured by rippling Hammond organ and a guitar solo that conjures Jack White via the noisiest corners of Santana's *Abraxas*. "Welcome home; we won the war," Neff declares on the closing, slow-burning title track. After 40 minutes of interstellar battle, she's earned the bragging rights. ***Ryan Reed***

The Sharp Things
EverybodyEverybody ROPEADOPE

The Sharp Things began as two friends escaping New York City for a musical retreat in the mid-'90s, and the band has steadily grown into a full-on New York ensemble with an increasing amount of collaborators that help that original duo, made up of vocalist/pianist **Perry Serpa** and drummer **Steven Gonzalez**, realize their vision of bouncy, full, percussive alt-rock. *EverybodyEverybody* finds Serpa heading up a group of around 20 musicians and vocalists that bring in everything from organ and strings to flugelhorn and theremin. The first half of the album tends toward bombastic exclamations, as in the lilting call-and-response of "Daphne's Coming Over," the dancy "Something Big" and the melodic sing-along of "Sport's Drinking Again," which brings together seemingly all of those previously mentioned collaborators, building to a climax of resounding horns that give way to the ironic interlude of "Hail to the Chief." The tracks take a subdued turn with "There's Been No One Since You," which lowers the energy but rightly maintains the full sound that is the band's strength. The album climaxes with the musical-theater vibe of "Family Day at the Lake" and closing track "The Libertine Ciel Rouge," which actually sounds like the musical offspring of Tom Waits and Gloria Estefan.
Matt Inman

Bleached
Welcome the Worms DEAD OCEANS

"Keep on Keepin' On," the infectious first single off **Bleached**'s second album, is an apt indicator for what follows on *Welcome The Worms*. The group, led by sisters **Jennifer** and **Jessie Clavin**, captures a sense of fun in the music on the album–even when the lyrics themselves reflect darker or heavier topics. Their punk-laced power-pop is best exemplified on songs like "Wasted on You," a bouncy post-breakup number, and "Sour Candy," an anthemic track with a West Coast '60s feel. The musicians balance their edgy punk-rock predilections with a catchy pop aesthetic, which ensures that none of the grittiness alienates a possible listener. The album is notably better than Bleached's 2013 debut, *Ride Your Heart*, which may speak to the benefit extended touring can have on songwriting. Chirping closer "Hollywood, We Did It All Wrong" belongs earlier on the album–if only so that listeners will definitely hear it–and is a reminder buoyant pop songs don't have to be weightless.
Emily Zemler

Jim Donovan
Sun King Warriors SELF-RELEASED

Jim Donovan has a way with rhythm. He's demonstrated that tack as drummer and percussionist for the band Rusted Root, a solo artist, a facilitator for drum circles, and as an educator on meditation and higher consciousness. With *Sun King Warriors*, Donovan gets his groove on, channeling that unabashed enthusiasm into a series of songs that are both rowdy and rejuvenating. It's all about the beat, whether it's the full-on assault of "Blend into You" and "I'm Doing Fine" or the flurry of tribal percussion that ignites "March of the Sun King Warriors." It gets the blood flowing, making it a challenge to listen and sit still, which is Donovan's goal from the get-go. Regardless, that frenzied pace slackens during the second half of the set, starting with the seductive, sensual ballad "Love on Me" and continuing with the delirious drift of the track that follows, "Can't Stop Falling." The rest of the album tempers the tempo further, with an emphasis on the hypnotic over the hyper, although the melodies prove equally enticing. It's not quite a call to arms, but a dichotomy that merges motion with metaphysics. There are lessons to be learned, but patience–and perseverance–may be required.
Lee Zimmerman

OFF THE TRACKS

Jonah Smith
Easy Prey Music
ROAD

The recipient of numerous accolades—including a stint on *America's Got Talent* and top honors at the Independent Music Awards—**Jonah Smith** has seen his career blossom from the very beginning. His debut album *Industry Rule* brought opening-act opportunities on tours both here and abroad, while succeeding efforts garnered extensive airplay and invitations to play at Bonnaroo and Langerado. Consequently, he releases the self-produced *Easy Prey* amid some higher than normal expectations, with a title that suggests he's being subjected to increasingly critical scrutiny. Opening track "Sunnyville" and its revealing follow-up "Where I Started From" find him vulnerable, due to especially sedate circumstance. However, Smith's always possessed an ability to blur the boundaries and, here again, he does an admirable job. That agreeable disposition is evidenced in the soft shuffle of "Make Me Change My Mind," the mid-tempo pace of "Heavy Hangs the Crown," the soulful set-up of "Try Your Best," and the gospel-like flourish of "Turn This Ship Around" and "Drop Me a Line." Hints of Paul Simon and a more down-home demeanor are revealed in "Easy Prey" and "We Tried Like Hell," respectively, before the album is brought to a stirring conclusion with the celebratory "Robin, Robin." Smith deserves credit for creating an emphatic impression, even while maintaining his generally unassuming stance. *Lee Zimmerman*

Young the Giant
Home of the Strange
FUELED BY RAMEN

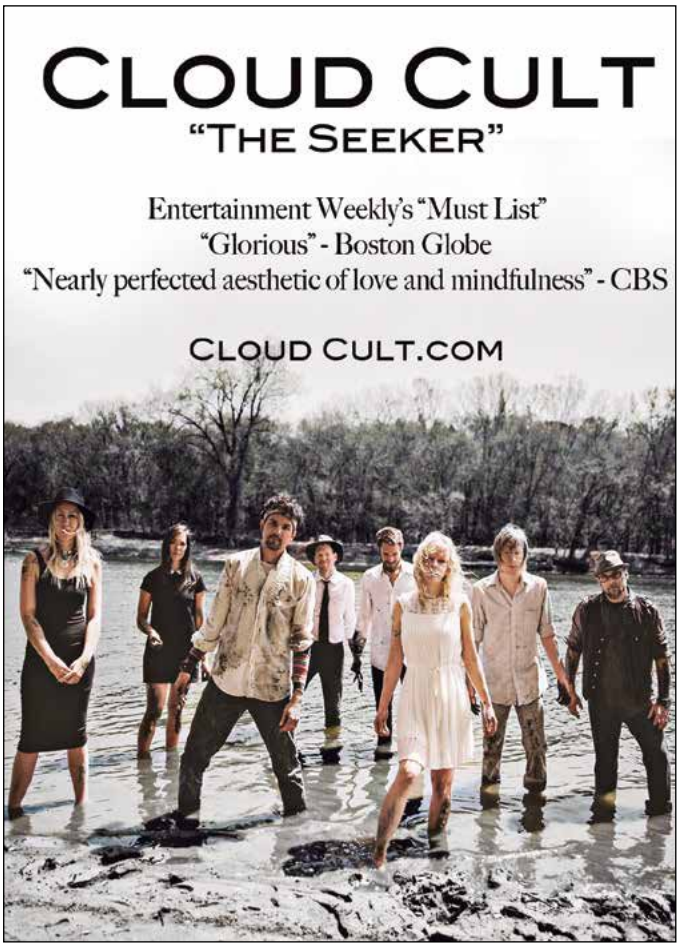
Young the Giant took a bold creative leap with their second album, 2014's *Mind Over Matter*, amplifying their debut's amiable alt-rock with prog chops, disco grooves and orchestral nods. Still, most critics shat on that evolution, pigeonholing the band as the poster boys of soulless corporate rock. Ironically, their third LP, with its slick production and simplified arrangements, often justifies the insults they undeservingly earned last go-round. Take "Jungle Youth," which lumbers into its bluesy arena-rock riff, or "Silvertongue," a ham-fisted attempt at dance-pop that would slot in seamlessly on a One Direction LP. Damn shame. Frontman **Sameer Gadhia** remains a vocal powerhouse, but his personality is often squashed by the gloss. One exception is the dynamic ballad "Titus Was Born," on which he emotes across his full vocal range—first over fingerpicked acoustics, then throbbing '80s synths. Select highlights capitalize on *Mind Over Matter*'s ornate blueprint: The catchiest, "Mr. Know It All," is a tongue-in-cheek art-pop zinger that mingles funk bass with stoner guitar fuzz and classical piano goofs. But *Home of the Strange* still suffers from its short supply of strangeness. *Ryan Reed*

Deerhoof
The Magic POLYVINYL

Deerhoof have crafted classic LPs by scraping out lo-fi noise-rock (*Milk Man*) and meticulously over-dubbing hi-fi art-pop (*Friend Opportunity*), switching studio techniques as frequently as they've morphed styles. For their 14th album, *The Magic*, the quartet decamped to an abandoned office space in the New Mexico desert, knocking out 41 minutes of reliably batshit absurdity in one week. This time, the rapid-fire approach is evident, occasionally to the music's detriment. "That Ain't No Life to Me" finds drummer/producer **Greg Saunier** half-mumbling punk platitudes ("I don't care how the other half lives/ 'Cause I've seen how the other half dies") over rudimentary, speaker- splitting distortion; "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire" finds singer/bassist **Satomi Matsuzaki** moaning awkwardly over a plodding drum machine drone collage. But lop off these anomalies, and you're left with some of Deerhoof's most multifaceted work in years—from sugary noise-pop ("Kafe Mania!") to prog-fusion funk ("Model Behavior," highlighted by a martian laser-beam guitar solo) to a heady banger that resembles an avant-garde Beastie Boys ("Debut"). Despite its tedious moments, the peaks of *The Magic* reaffirm Deerhoof's status as one of modern rock's rare innovators. *Ryan Reed*

New Madrid
magnetkingmagnetqueen
NORMALTOWN

Athens, Ga.-based quartet **New Madrid** create quietly thrilling indie rock with their third album, *magnetkingmagnet-queen*—a 15-track collection that'll quickly become the secret you can't wait to introduce to your friends. The band melds familiar influences into a delicious new mix. The terse, cascading guitars of Television run through these tunes. The band takes a page from '90s-era Modest Mouse in its disorienting and wild-eyed grooves. And you'll hear early Animal Collective in the loose, weird-out campfire vocals. With tracks ranging from less than two minutes (the bouncy punk thump of "36 Grams of Sugar") to over 11 (the churning, percussive instrumental "Guay Lo"), *magnetkingmagnetqueen* ebbs and flows more like a live show than a proper album. New Madrid throw endless ideas onto the record and, often, the least polished work best—first listens may have you scratching your head, but you'll hum along by the second. "Dress Up" features screaming saxophones, a web of guitars and frontman **Phil McGill** chanting, "Feeling in my brain, feeling in my blood. Some people tell me that that is not enough." Those people haven't heard *magnetkingmagnetqueen*. *Justin Jacobs*



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DAY OF THE DEAD

A Track-By-Track Look at The National's Comprehensive Grateful Dead Tribute BY ROB MITCHUM

At 59 tracks and nearly six hours, the voluminous *Day of the Dead* is a difficult project to wrap a single critical opinion around. But compilers **Aaron** and **Bryce Dessner** of **The National** recognized that a true survey of the Dead needed to cover several dimensions, from their still-under-recognized songwriting prowess and deep roots-folk credentials to their improvisational journeys and experimental oddities. Better then to go track by track, examining how faces familiar and less so bring the catalog into the 2010s, with results as varied as, well, a typical Dead show.

"THUNDER" (VOL. 1)

01. Touch of Grey – The War on Drugs

Adam Granduciel's soft spot for '80s FM rock makes the Dead's biggest hit a snug fit, and he somehow creates a version that seems even more of its glossy decade than the original. Your appreciation will likely hinge on how you respond to Jerry's iconic solo being replaced by harmonica.

02. Sugaree – Phosphorescent, Jenny Lewis & Friends

Played at a peppy speed that would have winded the Dead at most points in their history, this version gains some brightness at the expense of the underlying melancholy. **Phosphorescent**'s **Matthew Houck** is an amicable lead and house-band organist **Walter Martin** shines, but **Jenny Lewis** is wasted in the Donna role.

03. Candyman – Jim James & Friends

Wisely, very few *Day of the Dead* participants make the futile attempt to recreate Jerry's singular guitar sound, but there are a handful of singers capable of channeling his equally extraordinary voice. My Morning Jacket's **Jim James** is one of these vocal heirs, bringing an appropriate mix of joy and sorrow to this straightforward cover.

04. Cassidy – Moses Sumney, Jenny Lewis & Friends

One of the most indie-rock-adaptable Dead tunes was central to this compilation's origin story, standing as the highlight of The National's set with **Bob Weir** at his TRI Studios in 2012. (YouTube it!) Unfortunately, this version pales in comparison, rushing the pace, under-utilizing Lewis for a second time, and making no attempt at the glorious trumpet-led jam of the earlier take.

05. Black Muddy River – Bruce Hornsby & DeYarmond Edison

The last song Jerry sang gets an appropriately funereal arrangement from Dead alumnus **Bruce Hornsby** and **DeYarmond Edison**, the reunited childhood band of Bon Iver's **Justin Vernon**. The merger produces the smooth yet rustic sound you'd expect, with a mid-song ambient swerve that freshens up a familiar cover for Hornsby.

06. Loser – Ed Droste, Binki Shapiro & Friends

Much of *Day of the Dead* draws its consistency from the house band, made up of Aaron and Bryce Dessner and **Bryan** and **Scott Devendorf** of The National, **Josh Kaufman** and **Sam Cohen** of The Yellowbirds, **Walter Martin** from The Walkmen and Takka Takka's **Conrad Doucette**. "Loser" is emblematic of their chosen sound: tight rhythmically, respectful but confident guitars (the central riff is suitably gnarly), an uncomplicated rhythm section and keyboards providing atmospheric density.

07. Peggy-O – The National

That house band's sound is not the same thing as a full-on Nationalization, which is demonstrated on this first set folk favorite. Singer **Matt Berninger**'s restrained baritone and a hushed but driving backdrop transforms the tune into a somber hymn–appropriate given the use of a converted church for much of the compilation's recording.

08. Box of Rain – Kurt Vile & The Violators (featuring J Mascis)

Kurt Vile has regularly denied any Dead influence on his own music, but "Box of Rain" turns out to be the most faithful cover on the entire collection. With two generations of indie-rock guitar heroes, it mainly serves as a sort of six-string karaoke, giving both Vile and Dinosaur Jr.'s **J Mascis** a chance to solo over Phil's country rock.

09. Rubin and Cherise – Bonnie 'Prince' Billy & Friends

A hidden gem of the Dead repertoire gets polished into one of the compilation's standouts, with a drippy lead guitar, a deceptively breezy rhythm and a horn section that makes its entrance at just the right time. It's the first of two coal-mine-deep cuts rescued by **Will Oldham**, an unlikely head despite the heady beard.

10. To Lay Me Down – Perfume Genius, Sharon Van Etten & Friends

Mike Hadreas of Perfume Genius is a master of the haunted ballad and, here, his wounded tenor turns Hunter/Garcia's romantic prayer into a deathbed eulogy, slithering over an eerie, drumless backdrop of feedback, reverbed lap steel and the occasional synth burble.

11. New Speedway Boogie – Courtney Barnett

For "Speedway," the bleaker and swampier the better, and **Courtney Barnett**'s Aussie drawl is well suited for the task. With a dark choogle and a menacing electric piano skeeving in the background, it's a cynical counterpoint to

any indie-rock fans who mistakenly think the Dead were all dancing bears and turtles.

12. Friend of the Devil – Mumford & Sons

It's not a fast "FotD," or the slow version–it's a predictably mid-tempo take from arguably the compilation's biggest artist at the time of its release. More in the spirit of the recent, less rootsy, arena-rock **Mumford & Sons**, it's a rom-com soundtrack–glossy and yearning in a way that the Dead could never have pulled off had they even wanted to.

13. Uncle John's Band – Lucius

The first truly dramatic reworking of the set changes the original folky strummer into 21st-century Brooklyn electro-pop. And if you can get past the initial shock, it's actually a pretty successful experiment, with singers **Jess Wolfe** and **Holly Laessig** nailing the all-important harmonies, and a bizarre, schizoid mix of lo-fi drums and keys that even dares to chop up the beloved closing riff.

14. Me and My Uncle – The Lone Bellow & Friends

After all, the alternative is trying to sound as greasy and grimy as the Dead and missing the mark badly. **The Lone Bellow**'s cover of John Phillips' cowboy tale is just too dang polite, with the only creative addition some Morricone-ish backing vocals fulfilling the band's name.

15. Mountains of the Moon – Lee Ranaldo, Lisa Hannigan & Friends

Sonic Youth's **Lee Ranaldo** was one of the earliest flag-wavers for indie/Dead diplomatic relations, and his first song is a true head's choice. Despite his noise-rock credentials, "MotM" is done indie-jam-style, letting the cosmic lyrics handle the psychedelic responsibilities.

16. Black Peter – ANOHNI and yMusic

The pairing of **ANOHNI**–best known for her work as Antony & The Johnsons–and modern classical ensemble **yMusic** is one of the set's most intriguing, never mind handing them one of the Dead's most underrated tunes. So perhaps it isn't surprising that the result is nearly unrecognizable and quite disorienting, with even the lyrics rewritten and rushed. A curio.

17. Garcia Counterpoint – Bryce Dessner

Outside of The National, Bryce Dessner moonlights as a composer and, here, he lends some of that classical training to this original piece. Though it's not orchestral–rather, it's a gorgeous, polyphonic collage of looped guitars playing licks that are very Jerry without evoking any specific songs–it's closest to "Althea," but never quite traces it. It's sort of a minimalist *Grayfolded*, and a welcome change of pace from the songier tributes.

18. Terrapin Station (Suite) – Daniel Rossen, Christopher Bear & The National (featuring Josh Kaufman, Conrad Doucette, So Percussion and Brooklyn Youth Chorus)

The undisputed centerpiece of the compilation goes all out on the full "Terrapin Station" suite–youth choir, percussion troupe, woodwinds, strings, the works–in a loving representation of the Dead at their most excessive. But it also stretches past mere reverence with some fun swerves, like an abrupt pullback on the big "inspiration" line and a clever tease in the "Terrapin Flyer" section.

19. Attics of My Life – Angel Olsen

After that heavy meal, "Attics" is a welcome digestif, a mellow mini-choir drenched in echo, accompanied by little more than brushed drums. If only the wordless vocal and lap-steel bridge were longer.

20. St. Stephen (Live) – Wilco with Bob Weir

One of two live "encore bonus" tracks featuring Weir, this one is a lovably AUD-y recording with a nearly inaudible Bobby, and **Nels Cline** doing his best impression of Jerry at his busiest. It gets a little shaky in the bridge, but the band nails the crunch of the back half, with some great **Glenn Kotche** drum fills.

"LIGHTNING" (VOL. 2)

01. If I Had the World to Give – Bonnie 'Prince' Billy

A Beatles-esque tune hidden at the end of *Shakedown Street* and only performed three times, you'd be forgiven if you forgot this one even existed. But in an adorned voice and piano rendition, Will Oldham rescues the song from both obscurity and overproduction, one of the best functions a tribute album can perform.

02. Standing on the Moon – Phosphorescent & Friends

A better-known song, but another reclamation project, as the latter-day Jerry ballad is given a laid-back reading by Matthew Houck and the house band. The production is still era-appropriate (dig those "Chariots of Fire" drums) but less overbearing, and the tempo is less like a winding-down clock.

03. Cumberland Blues – Charles Bradley and Menahan Street Band

Slamming together Daptone soul act **Charles Bradley** with the Dead's hyper-bluegrass staple is some devilish scheming. But it works, with the song slowed down to a lascivious funk, the haphazard harmonies switched out for slinky call and response, and enough ad-lib expectorations to make Bobby green with envy.

04. Ship of Fools – The Tallest Man on Earth & Friends

Swedish singer-songwriter **Kristian Matsson**'s early-Dylan whine has mellowed out to a late-Dylan croak, so "Ship of Fools" has some Dylan & The Dead vibes, if that project hadn't been a complete disaster. It's fine and harmless and has sad, boozy horns, but the cover is maybe one of the few on *Day of the Dead* that falls short of its *Deadicated* equivalent.

05. Bird Song – Bonnie 'Prince' Billy & Friends

The best known from Bonnie 'Prince' Billy's trio of contributions is the least satisfying, coming off thin without qualifying as sparse. "Bird Song" is a particularly unforgiving Jerry vocal to replace, and Oldham gives it a good go,

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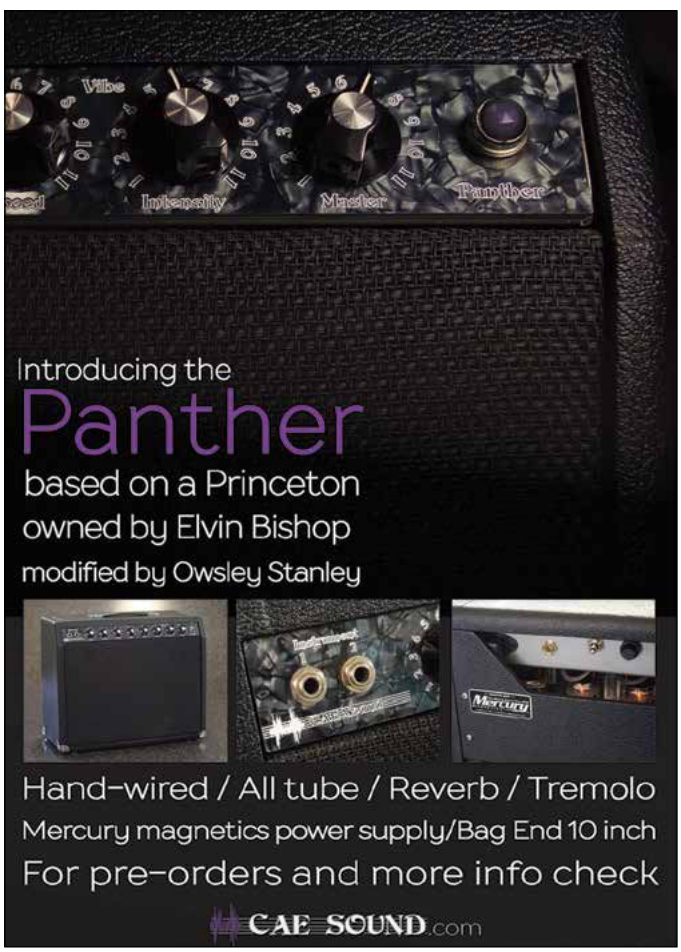

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but the straight-up arrangement and solos fail to add enough to fill what it subtracts.

06. Morning Dew – The National

Speaking of weird vocal matchmaking, Berninger's deep tones are octaves away from the lonesome wail Jerry would reach in classic "Dew"s. The National tailor their arrangement around this difference, with their take on Bonnie Dobson's post-nuclear folk song seething instead of building, an organ drone and near-martial drumbeat bringing out the homophone in "morning."

07. Truckin' – Marijuana Deathsquads

Interpret it how you will, but Bob-associated songs are few and far between on this set, and two of those that made the cut are radically deconstructed. (See also "Estimated Prophet.") Minnesota noise-pranksters **Marijuana Deathsquads** come closer to the weirdo-punk Pop-O-Pies "Truckin'" from 1982, preserving only the vocals and filling out the rest with synth bleeps, sax and guitar fragments, and a manic drum freakout.

08. Dark Star – Cass McCombs, Joe Russo & Friends

In his appearance with Alex Bleeker & The Freaks, **Cass McCombs** revealed himself as an uncanny clone for Jerry Garcia's voice–signing him up for Fare Thee Well would have saved a lot of trouble. Here, he teams up with the current king of the Dead cover band scene, drummer **Joe Russo**, to kick off a miniature "Dark Star" suite with a faithful, live/studio hybrid reading of the song's verses that segues into…

09. Nightfall of Diamonds – Nightfall of Diamonds

If you're not going to take "Dark Star" deep, then what's the point of a Dead tribute? A pseudonym for the house band, "Nightfall of Diamonds" provides the jamming essential to any "Dark Star" cover, eight minutes of commendable cosmic rock, eating away at the song structure until there's nothing but pure sound. As it should be.

10. Transitive Refraction Axis for John Oswald – Tim Hecker

Paying tribute to the experimental tape-manipulation mastermind of *Grayfolded* lends the whole project strong Deadhead credentials. Experimental, electronic artist **Tim Hecker** is just the guy to do it, too, lending his talent for disquieting sonics to this strange "Dark Star" coda that simultaneously evokes the tinny MIDI psych of '90s "Space" jams.

11. Goin' Down the Road Feeling Bad – Lucinda Williams & Friends

Lucinda Williams is a perfect candidate for any number of Dead songs, which makes this bland, slow-paced "GDTRFB" a deep disappointment. Williams' singing is essentially the song name in vocal chord form, but playing a fast song slow (or a slow song fast) is truly the lazy first draft of tribute compilations.

12. Playing in the Band – Tunde Adebimpe, Lee Ranaldo & Friends

No Donna wails, but "Playing" is played straight, with TV on the Radio's **Tunde Adebimpe** providing the Bobby-ish bookends. But the real meat is the compilation's second serious jam in four tracks, where a violin-bow-wielding Ranaldo does battle with the Dessners in a proper three-guitar drone freakout.

13. Stella Blue – Local Natives

Deadheads will hate this one weird cover! But rebuilding this beloved Jerry ballad from the ground up is one of the collection's boldest moves, basing it around drum-machine beats, sonar blorps and Coachella-band harmonies. An argument could be made that an honest tribute album should reflect its era's trends, and this track is the purest demonstration of today's prevalent indie-rock styles.

14. Eyes of the World – Tal National

After 32 tracks of Western rock music, the opening of this Nigerien band's "Eyes of the World" is a much-needed jump cut of perspective. The Dead's African influences entered primarily through The Rhythm Devils' ever-expanding drum arsenals and segments, but **Tal National** deftly coaxes the global DNA to the forefront of "Eyes," performing the second verse in French and adding an original coda that pays tribute to the song's early status as an improv launchpad.

15. Help on the Way – Béla Fleck

The jamband community will feel comfortable with **Béla Fleck** handling "Help on the Way," not to mention **Edgar Meyer** on bass and Planet Drum alumnus **Zakir Hussain** on tabla. It's a sparse version, but by incorporating elements of "Slipknot," there's plenty of room for proggy runs and solos that suit the nimble lineup, which provides the closest thing to Phil Lesh-style bass on the entire set.

16. Franklin's Tower – Orchestra Baobab

Coming after the brilliant Tal National "Eyes" doesn't do **Orchestra Baobob** any favors, as their "Franklin's Tower" is a less of an intercontinental fusion. Instead, the chords of "Franklin's Tower" (very capably) provide the foundation for an extended vamp in their usual style, which doesn't get around to rolling away the dew until the final seconds.

17. Till the Morning Comes – Luluc with Xylouris White

American Beauty's odd psych tune-out gets a reading more in line with the rest of that album, in a collaboration between Australian indie-folker **Luluc** and the lute-and-drums combo **Xylouris White**. Bad news: That puts the spotlight on some of Robert Hunter's most tossed-off lyrics. Good news: It provides a more subtle platform for two pretty wonderful minutes of full-band interplay after the singing is through.

18. Ripple – The Walkmen

Before their indefinite hiatus began in 2013, New York indie-rockers **The Walkmen** found time to record "Ripple," giving it a carnival-esque arrangement that suits the song's sweet melody without making your teeth hurt. It's less of a departure than the well-regarded Jane's Addiction version from *Deadicated*, but might age better.

19. Brokedown Palace – Richard Reed Parry with Caroline Shaw and Little Scream (featuring Garth Hudson)

Yes, that's **Garth Hudson** of The Band at the end of that lengthy artist credit,

contributing his trademark organ swells in the background of this arrangement by Arcade Fire multi-instrumentalist **Richard Reed Parry**. The near-choral blend of voices works well, though the music errs on the side of density by the end, a wall of sound swell that doesn't fit the fragile lyrics.

"SUNSHINE" (VOL. 3)

01. Here Comes Sunshine – Real Estate

Some of the most pleasant surprises come from the indie bands who don't actually have to stretch their approach very far to interpret the Dead. Bassist **Alex Bleeker** is a central figure in bridging the indie-jam barrier with his own projects, but it's still shocking how easily this cover settles into **Real Estate**'s natural habitat of gauzy sunset indie-pop.

02. Shakedown Street – Unknown Mortal Orchestra

Then there's **Ruban Nielson** of **Unknown Mortal Orchestra**, who filters "Shakedown Street" through his lo-fi Prince aesthetic with ease. Go figure that the "Disco Dead" trend capitulation would sound like their most current composition 40 years later...

03. Brown-Eyed Women – Hiss Golden Messenger

M.C. Taylor once called *Europe '72* "the Holy Grail of music," and his band "Brown-Eyed Women" is a reverent reenactment. Perhaps its most astute element is the gorgeous, understated way the organ and piano weave their way through the song, enriching without distracting.

04. Jack-A-Roe – This Is the Kit

It makes total sense to allow covers of covers on a Dead tribute, though "Jack-A-Roe" might be the least essential inclusion in this set, given how close **This Is the Kit**'s version lies to other artists'. English folk musician **Kate Stables** turns in a fine, traditional take—but it could've gone on a Joan Baez tribute just as easily.

05. High Time – Daniel Rossen & Christopher Bear

The polar opposite of their other appearance on the elaborate "Terrapin Station" suite, **Daniel Rossen** and **Christopher Bear**'s "High Time" is a raw acoustic take, gradually built up with pedal steel, *Pet Sounds* piano and supple drumming, but at its most effective when it's just Rossen and a hard-strummed guitar.

06. Dire Wolf – The Lone Bellow & Friends

Better than their "Me and My Uncle," **The Lone Bellow**'s "Dire Wolf" is pleasing but predictable dive-bar country, with the trio trading vocals and yielding the floor to some excellent pedal steel.

07. Althea – Winston Marshall, Kodiak Blue & Shura

Another synth-pop provocation like "Stella Blue," the most controversial move this "Althea" makes is to completely scrap the central riff in favor of a synthy vibes melody that Brent Mydland would've adored. **Winston Marshall**, one of Mumford's sons, works with British singer **Shura** and producer **Kodiak Blue** to wrap the song in an unlikely neon sheen.

08. Clementine Jam – Orchestra Baobab

"Clementine," which only survives as an instrumental fragment and loose structure for 1968 jams, is the first of a handful of super obscurities tucked into the homestretch of *Day of the Dead*. Its simple two chords make an even more appropriate substrate for **Orchestra Baobab**'s improvisation, since, unlike "Franklin's," there's not much to leave out.

09. China Cat Sunflower> I Know You Rider – Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks

Stephen Malkmus winked at Dead fans with a lyrical name-drop and hefty "St. Stephen" tease on his most recent album with **The Jicks**, but this "China> Rider" dives into the deep end. And he nails it—no one else on the compilation comes closer to the delirious mix of sloppiness and inspiration of the Dead at their best than this joyous 11-minutes-plus version. Coming from one of the biggest luminaries of indie rock (as the former leader of Pavement), it's powerful evidence that the indie-jam divide was only surface-deep this whole time.

10. Easy Wind – Bill Callahan

Pigpen's boozy and bluesy sexuality might be the most difficult Dead phase for modern indie to grapple with, but **Bill Callahan** (best known for his work as Smog) gives him a worthy cameo here. Callahan slows it down and strips out the blueshammering, and his conversational tone makes "ballin' that jack" sound about 90 percent less lascivious. Instead, he brings out the song's ominous undercurrents of the price one pays for hard labor and hard drinking.

11. Wharf Rat – Ira Kaplan & Friends

There's no denying that the Dead played molasses-slow for much of their later career, a turn off to many. But Yo La Tengo's **Ira Kaplan** finds the beauty in that crawl, setting a glacial pace for "Wharf Rat" that leaves space for an array of guitars to swirl through the song like August West's ghosts.

12. Estimated Prophet – The Rileys

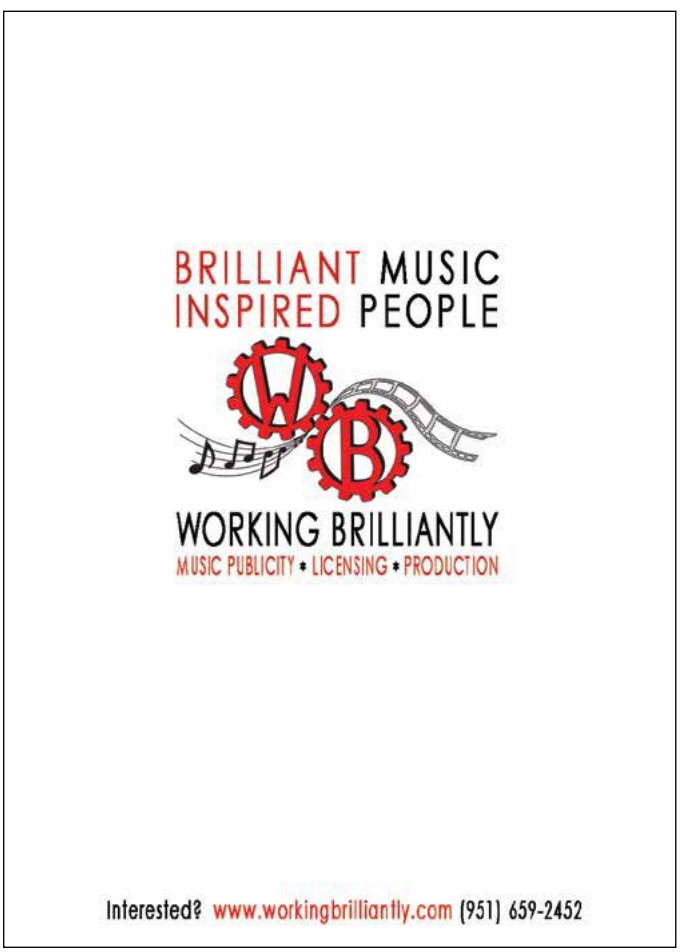
There are several points of contact between the Dead and minimalist composer giants **Terry Riley**, Steve Reich and Philip Glass, but seeing Riley (and his son **Gyan**) on a tribute record still warrants a double take. As you might guess, it's not your typical "Estimated," with the Mu-Tron guitars surgically extracted and joined by chanting, melodica solos and banged pianos.

13. Drums> Space – Man Forever, So Percussion & Oneida

A compilation this thorough has to include a "Drums> Space," and **Man Forever** and **Oneida** are the perfect current acts to pull it off. If anything it's too short—at under five minutes, it doesn't quite capture the love/hate long-form exploration that was mandatory at later Dead shows—and not aggressive enough to make the valid case for the Dead as the most successful noise act in music history.

14. Cream Puff War – Fucked Up

Canadian hardcore band **Fucked Up** wins the award for Least Likely Participant on



Day of the Dead, but amusingly, their version of the embryonic Dead single "Cream Puff War" is more than twice as long as the original. Singer **Damian Abraham**'s phlegmy yell will frighten off many, but the music is some of the most psychedelic of the entire comp–waves of chugging guitars and cyclical bass producing a hypnotic effect.

15. Dark Star – The Flaming Lips

If you're going to include two versions of a song, it might as well be "Dark Star," which took so many different forms in its history. **The Flaming Lips**' version is far less traditional, almost krautrock in its menacing rhythmic precision and deep supply of audio tricks. It's not just a worthy inclusion; it might be one of the best things the Lips have done in quite a while.

16. What's Become of the Baby – stargaze

Probably the weirdest track to make a studio Dead release, but if it's good enough to appear at Fare Thee Well, then why not here? This German contemporary classical collective succeeds in making the song even more disquieting, low frequencies droning while woodwinds follow the vocal line and do effective impressions of guitar feedback.

17. King Solomon's Marbles – Vijay Iyer

Proper jazz musician **Vijay Iyer** sets a high degree of difficulty for himself with this instrumental prog fractal from *Blues for Allah*. But resetting "King Solomon's Marbles" as a solo piano piece eases the information overload, with Jerry's frantic, cascading notes from the original smoothing out into mesmerizing harmonics.

18. Rosemary – Mina Tindle & Friends

Apart from the singing-through-a-fan vocal effect, the original "Rosemary" is a straightforward folk song, which is how French folk singer **Mina Tindle** treats it. That makes it a pleasant comedown from the last several tracks of high weirdness, but little more.

19. And We Bid You Goodnight – Sam Amidon

The traditional benediction loses a little something when performed solo and practiced, instead of in broken harmonies by an exhausted band. But it's the right way to end such a marathon of a tribute album…

20. I Know You Rider (Live) – The National with Bob Weir

…which is why this tape filler seems a bit wrong, even if it nicely brings the project full circle from the Weir & National collaboration that planted its seeds. But hearing Weir and Berninger trade verses is the kind of heartwarming, multi-generational summit that the collection mostly avoids, and while it's a little too mannered after the Malkmus version, it picks up with a late trumpet solo.

Plundering The Vaults

The Allman Brothers Band

Live from A&R Studios, New York, August 26, 1971

PEACH/ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND RECORDING COMPANY

If you could pervert the space-time continuum, then you would certainly have made sure that flatbed truck at the corner of Hillcrest Avenue and Bartlett had made its left turn a lot quicker on that late afternoon on Oct. 29, 1971. If it had, then **Duane Allman** wouldn't have had to swerve to avoid it, clipping the back of the truck and becoming airborne, his Harley-Davidson Sportster careening wildly, landing on top of him.

That huge loss to rock's mighty canon is felt even sharper with the release of *The Allman Brothers Band: Live from A&R Studios, New York, August 26, 1971*. Recorded only eight weeks before Duane's final ride, it shows what the Allman Brothers were like without that taint and burden of tragedy stalking them; when they still had the joyful recklessness without any of the pain. Without that shadow of sorrow hanging over them, they were a different band, with a cocky swagger and a telepathic connection between them, pulling sounds out of each other's psyche, then building towering edifices of sound, attitude, grace and even a little impatience.

Why impatience? They were a band going places, and they were going there fast. You can hear it in the insistence of "One Way Out," or in the innuendo and promises of the sextastic "Stormy Monday," or the haughty squall of Duane's guitar on "Don't Keep Me Wonderin'," bolstered by the seen-it-all voice of his then 23-year-old younger brother.

Recorded just a month after the release of *At Fillmore East*, this nine-song set, aired over New York FM station WPLJ, is nearly as fine—in fact, it is so well-recorded that you can even hear the tinkling of missed notes on "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," a song that has been compared to Coltrane's "sheets of sound." But here, those sheets are woven out of 500-thread-count Egyptian cotton. But the most spectacular moment on the disc is "Medley: You Don't Love Me/Soul Serenade." It would be worth the price of the record only to hear Duane honor his friend King Curtis, who had been recently murdered near his Harlem home, but it's Allman's sonorous solo eight minutes into

the medley where his guitar seems to be actually speaking a coded, but strangely understandable English—a marvel of human emotion and genius technique.
Jaan Uhelszki

Ramones

Ramones: 40th Anniversary Edition

RHINO

A GIF that recently made the rounds in the wake of original drummer and final surviving member **Tommy Ramone**'s passing in July 2014 showed the cover art from the **Ramones**' 1976 debut with just an empty brick wall. What can never be erased, however, are the spirits of him and his bandmates, **Joey**, **Johnny** and **Dee Dee**, immortalized in the music contained inside that iconic jacket: 29 minutes and four seconds of pure Queens poetry in leather, a flurry of Spector-inspired melodies played at maximum velocity. In honor of its 40th anniversary, Rhino has expanded this half-hour across three CDs and one vinyl LP in the form of a gorgeous 12x12 hardcover box set. Lovingly overseen by the album's original producer, **Craig Leon**, this deluxe edition of *Ramones* spills over with great rare material in addition to the beautiful remastering job Leon did of the classic tracklist itself (both in stereo and mono). The second disc is devoted to a cache of demo and single versions of such LP favorites as "53rd & 3rd," "Chain Saw," "Loudmouth" and, of course, the eternal punk-culture anthem "Blitzkrieg Bop." The third CD, meanwhile, features both sets from a particularly wild August night in '76 at The Roxy in West Hollywood boasting a quality on par with *It's Alive*. Forty years later, this indelible debut still perseveres as a beacon of hope for every kid with a guitar and a dream. *Ron Hart*

The Paul Butterfield Blues Band

Got a Mind to Give Up Living: Live 1966 REAL GONE MUSIC

This live album, which captures **The Paul Butterfield Blues Band** in their short-lived prime, will answer any doubters' questions about why these guys were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2015. Born out of Chicago's vibrant blues scene of the 1960s, this sextet (one of rock's first interracial groups) boasted two virtuoso musicians—Butterfield on harmonica and **Michael Bloomfield** on guitar—as well as guitarist **Elvin Bishop** (Like Butterfield and Bloomfield, a Blues Music Hall of Famer), organist **Mark Naftalin**, former Howlin' Wolf bassist **Jerome Arnold** and veteran blues drummer **Billy Davenport**. This recording comes from a performance in a small Boston folk club, done between their self-titled 1965 debut and their fabled 1966 effort *East-West* (their last album with Bloomfield). Blues disciples who played with rock-and-roll fervor, the band sounds like a force of nature from their opening, a razor-sharp rendition of Elmore James' "Look Over Yonder's Wall," straight through their set closer—a rousing five-minute workout of "Got My Mojo Working." Considering this is an audience recording from 1966, the sound quality is pretty decent. Although Butterfield's vocals get somewhat lost in the mix, the band's playing comes across more clearly. This hour-long set boasts numerous highlights: the interplay of Butterfield's harmonica and Bloomfield's guitar on the old Tampa Red tune "Love Her with a Feeling" (which the band never recorded), the funkiness that Naftalin's organ adds to Allen Toussaint's "Get Out of My Life, Woman," and the way Bloomfield and Bishop's guitars duel on a fiery take of Smokey Robinson's "One More Heartache," as well as on the slinkier title track. The set's centerpiece, however, is their epic 12-plus-minute version of Nat Adderley's jazz standard "Work Song." While everyone shines during this instrumental, Butterfield's herculean harmonica-playing and the expansive guitar work by Bishop and, especially, Bloomfield are, as they might have said in '66, "mind-blowing, man." *Michael Berick*

The Beach Boys

Pet Sounds (50th Anniversary Deluxe Edition) CAPITOL

Pet Sounds, in its original 1966 monaural 13-song incarnation, ran for a little more than 36 minutes. Since then, as it's worked its way near the top of pretty much every "best albums ever" list, it's been reissued and expanded so many times that even the most dedicated fan could lose track. Among those, the 1996 30th-anniversary edition brought it up to four discs—including the first-ever true stereo mix, a few dozen in-progress session segments and alternate versions—while the 2006 40th anniversary edition augmented the original album with a "making of" DVD and other ephemera. Now, as *Pet Sounds* turns 50, Capitol has gone to town once again, with a new four-discer that reprises both the mono and stereo mixes of the album, offers largely the same session recordings and alternate takes, then tosses in various live recordings of the album material spanning the '60s to the '90s, the so-called "Stacks-O-Vocals" (instruments stripped out) and, finally, a Blu-ray disc containing the various mixes plus bonus material. That's a whole lotta *Pet Sounds*, more than five hours' worth, in fact. Much of it makes for fascinating listening if you're an aficionado, and will probably bore—or at least confuse—those who are not. For the former group, to listen to **Brian Wilson** playing the studio and directing his musicians as he builds tracks like "Wouldn't It Be Nice," "God Only Knows" and "Caroline No" is to hear true genius at work. But here's the thing: In the end, nothing matches the experience of hearing the original, 36-minute *Pet Sounds*, in glorious mono, from start to finish. As rewarding as it is to have all these treasures shared with us every which way, nothing more, in the end, is really needed. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Bad Company

Live in Concert 1977 & 1979

SWAN SONG/RHINO

Rumor has it that in their prime, **Paul Rodgers** and **Bad Company** rivaled even Led Zeppelin as hard-rock's biggest hedonists, so it was only fitting that they called Zep's own Swan Song label home. As songwriters, the band didn't exactly tackle the deepest subject matter—"Ready for Love," "Feel Like Makin' Love" and "Can't Get Enough" (of, you guessed it, your love) are just a few of the classics—but, as a live unit, they brought the wood, so to speak, in a primal display of bludgeoning riffs that gave Rodgers ample room to show off his silk-and-sandpaper vocal chops. Strangely enough, this is Bad Co.'s first official live album, and it offers up some hidden gems that shocked Rodgers himself when he heard the tapes. Of the two dates spread over two discs, the Houston show from '77 stands out; guitarist **Mick Ralphs** gets a punchier sound and trades gutsy licks with Rodgers, especially on the extended vamp that closes "Live for the Music." Relative rarities are the outstanding "Leaving You" (in a higher key, with more fire than the original *Burnin' Sky* version) and "Simple Man," which finds Rodgers testing his limits over the muscular rhythms of the late **Boz Burrell** on bass and **Simon Kirke** on drums. Back when an arena full of rock fans—some pleasantly stoned, some decidedly otherwise—would spark their lighters and sway as one, this is the music that brought them together. Almost 40 years later, it's on again this summer, with The Black Crowes' Rich Robinson taking over for Ralphs.
Bill Murphy

The Allman Brothers Band

Lyrics Born

Now Look What You've Done, Lyrics Born! Greatest Hits! MOBILE HOME

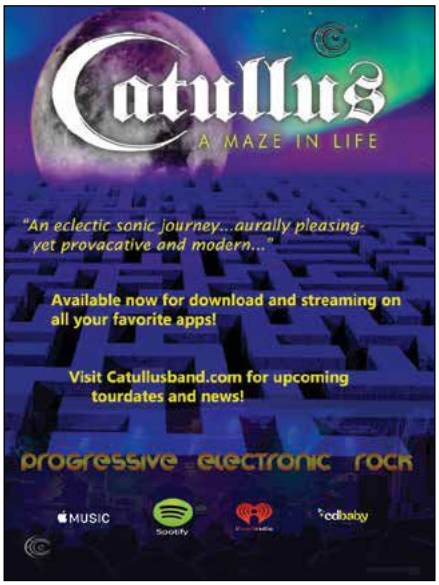
It's easy to forget that the Solesides/Quannum crew is one of the longest-running hip-hop collectives in existence. That's largely because they like to take their sweet time between albums, and **Lyrics Born** is no exception to that tendency. With only four full-lengths since he dropped his debut, *Later That Day*, in 2003, it's been difficult for LB's fans to keep track of his evolution. It's a shame, really, since the diminutive baritone's recorded output displays a wide breadth of stylistic competence. Thankfully, he's decided to collect some of his best work from over the last decade-plus for easy digestion. Over the course of 16 tracks, LB takes you from homegrown, Bay Area hip-hop to time-traveling explorations in disco, soul and funk. Arranged somewhat chronologically, you get a clearer perspective on LB's evolution as an MC, particularly as he starts to embrace live instruments, generally handled by the various members of **Galactic**, who make a full appearance on their *From the Corner to the Block* collaboration "I Got It (What You Need)," in addition to a couple of songs from LB's most recent album, *Real People*, produced in part by **Ben Ellman** and **Robert Mercurio**. In all, this serves as a solid refresher course on one of the Bay Area's most adventurous MCs.
Wayan Zoey

Paul McCartney

Pure McCartney

CONCORD/HEAR MUSIC

You have a few choices as to how you would like your *Pure McCartney*. If you stick with the 2-CD version, you'll get 39 tracks, mostly the biggest post-Beatles solo hits, with a handful of **Wings** and **Fireman** tunes tossed in. Or you can spring for the four-disc, 67-song package, which naturally digs a little deeper into the catalog, unearthing a handful of unjustly ignored gems and more than a few that never got much traction the first time around, some for good reason. Each version starts where The Beatles left off, in 1970 with "Maybe I'm Amazed," from *McCartney*, the solo debut, and goes as far as 2014's "Hope for the Future," written and recorded for a video game. One smart move by the compilers was to mix the sets non-chronologically: Songs from the '70s sometimes follow songs from the '80s and so on, random-shuffle style, the very last track on all versions being "Junk" from that same '70 debut. That ping-ponging playing order tends to spread the wealth more evenly so that all the best stuff isn't concentrated near the top. No matter how you play it though, *Pure McCartney* is a reminder—not that one is really needed—that this man's solo discography, while it could never approach that of The Beatles' output, is remarkably well-packed with ingenious songwriting and performance. *Jeff Tamarkin*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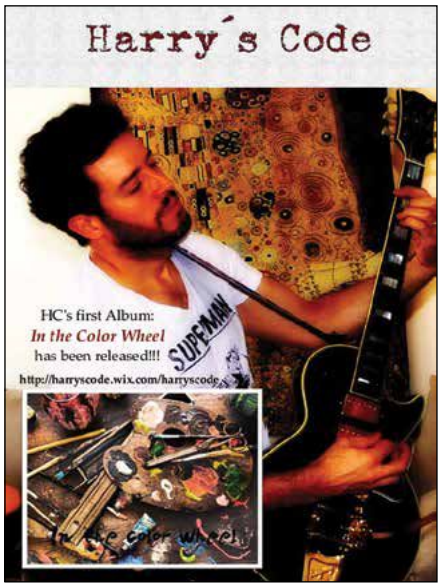
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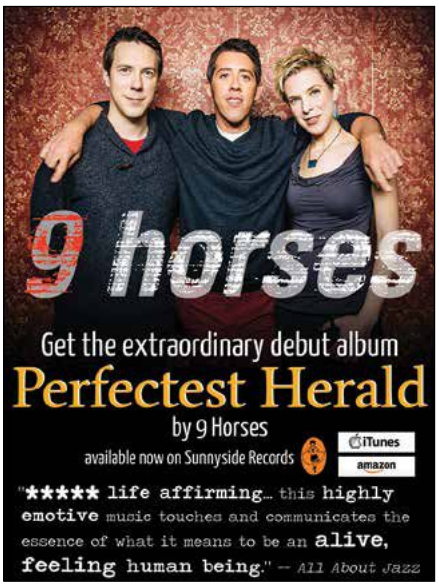
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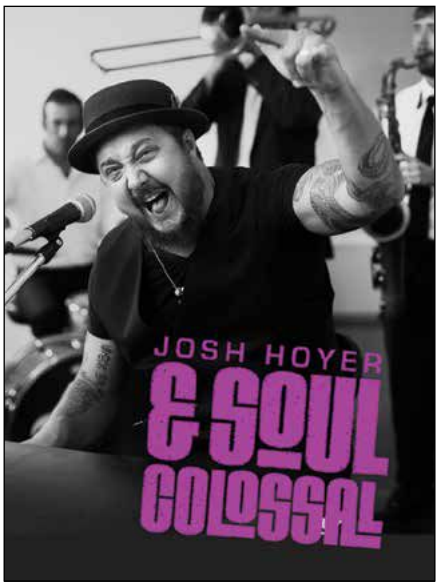
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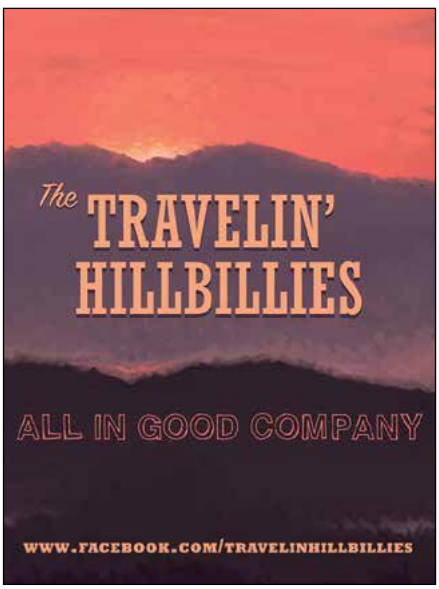
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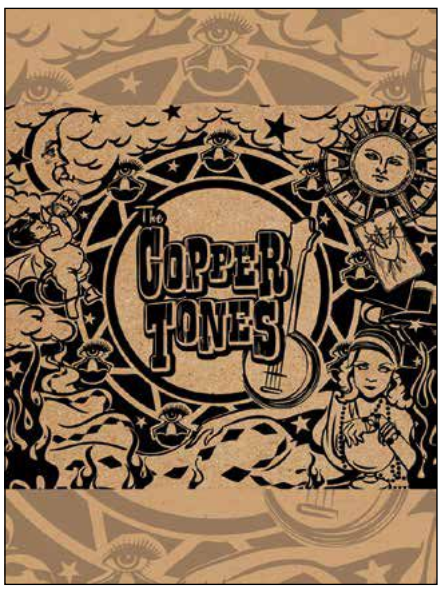
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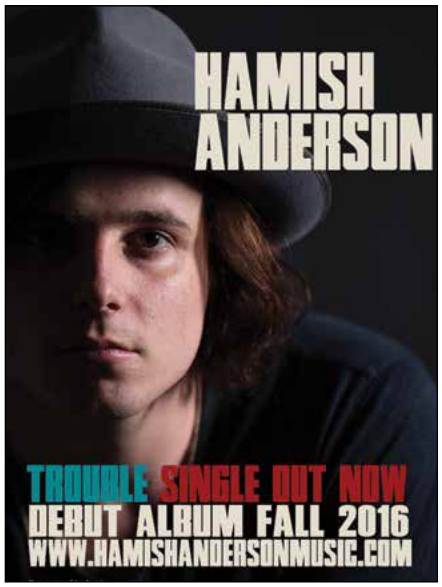

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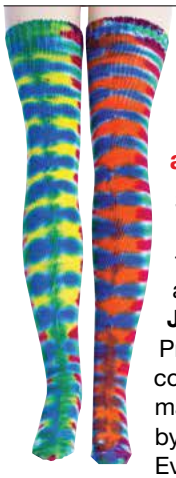

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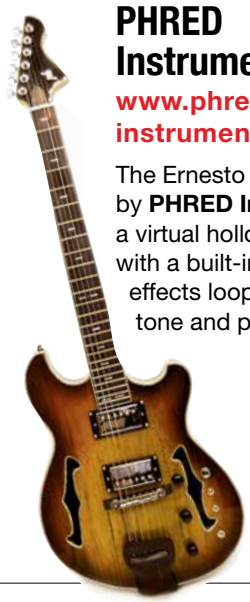

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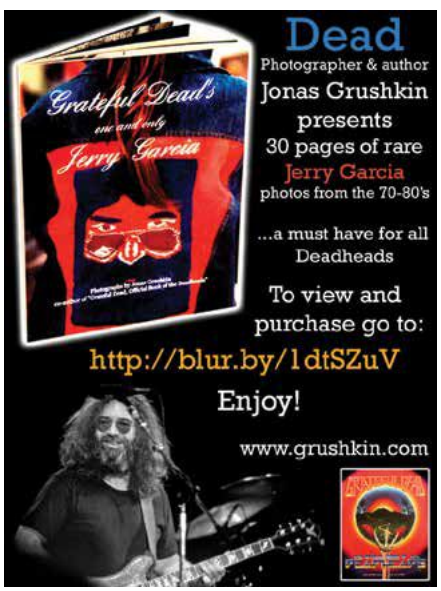

Ramping Up our Relix Video Series

Our video team is busier than ever. Aside from our ongoing Live at Relix performances, be sure to stop by Relix.com to check out a variety of new and ongoing series we have in the works. They include: A Relix Conversation, Flying Dog Brewery Presents: The Truth, Live from Plum Creek Sound Studios, Artist on Artist and plenty more.

Reflections of a Post-Jerry Deadhead

Speaking of our videos, as befits our July_August issue, which encompasses the Days Between [the anniversaries of Jerry Garcia's birth and death], here is a piece from Relix *Video Manager Brian Stollery, which originally appeared on Relix.com.*

I'm a Deadhead. The Grateful Dead's music is the soundtrack to my life. Their artwork adorns my cubicle and apartment walls, and they are my favorite band, head-and-shoulders above any other artist I've seen or heard. I've hung on every note, been lost in the sonic bliss of a favorite song, sung along to every word, and ventured deeply into the psychedelic realm, joyfully dancing along the edge of insanity while peering within and discovering new parts of myself. All that separates me from many older Deadheads is that I never saw the band with Jerry.

It's easy to see how I, and many other young folks, gravitated toward the Dead. Never buying into the rock music idiom that included bands like The Beatles and Led Zeppelin, I seldom sought music that was technically brilliant or overtly catchy. The first music I cut my teeth on was punk. That music's energy was rough and tumble, and it was the scraggly outlier of other, more polished rock acts. Punk and hardcore shows became meeting places for like-minded misfits. But then a very cool high-school teacher burnt me a disc of essential live Dead after I played Sublime's reggae version of "Scarlet Begonias" after class. He told me about their culture and shared many of his experiences from the road—in the parking lot and at shows. Like any brilliant work, it took very devoted studying to fully appreciate the atypical polyrhythms and teetering loop-de-loops of the Dead's compositions, the robust whirlwinds, vast terrains and celestial imagery of their songs. The music felt liquid, and the more it seeped into the vast expanses of my mind and heart, the more it felt like this music was a part of me and always had been. This unearthing coincided with puberty and other nascent aspects of my teenage self.

The next part of most "How I Became a Deadhead" stories go something like: "Then I saw the boys for the first time in Hartford in '84 and had my mind blown on acid and did the whole rest of the tour."

While I missed the real deal, I connected with the beauty of the Dead's music and the culture surrounding it in other, untold ways. As Jerry's influence has disseminated so far and wide, my ushering into the scene was a scattered happening through experiences at countless concerts and festivals. Notable events included teenage forays to Gathering of the Vibes, a very psychedelic trip to New York City to see STS9, ditching the prom to go see Dark Star Orchestra at Princeton University (where DSO opted to recreate a Dead show that my uncle attended), a road trip to see Phil Lesh and Friends at Penn's Landing the day after my high-school graduation, the "Deadheads for Obama" show at Penn State and the ensuing 2009 Dead tour.

I find the Grateful Dead's warm vibe in new, unexpected places all the time, like when I hear vendors playing the Dead at a primarily EDM festival—or notice a bartender at an after-hours Brooklyn warehouse party rocking a Steal Your Face patch while deep house blares. Jerry lives in every blade of grass, every ray of sunshine and every drop of dew that glistens on the face of a newborn doe. Much like my Jerry-time Deadhead counterparts, I've been freaked out by a spooky "Dark Star," had a "Terrapin Station" bring order and warmth to a chaotic trip, and even told an old girlfriend once that, yes, we could all see the Steal Your Face in the moon, too.

I'm far from the only one—an entire generation has embraced this music and become the first wave of post-Jerry Heads. While it is impossible to quantify the Dead's influence, their level of cultural prominence today offers plenty of fodder for younger fans of the band. We get to see Phil and Friends play very regularly at Terrapin Crossroads. We find hints of the Grateful Dead in Ryan Adams, My Morning Jacket, Phish and *Game of Thrones*. Modern indie-rock luminaries are paying homage to the Dead via The National's *Day of the Dead* compilation. New literature on the band seems to be published every year. We hear "Truckin'" at coffee shops and we wear Jerry Garcia ties to weddings. We bid farewell at Soldier Field last year, while we are getting our tickets for Dead & Company this summer. I see versions of my teenage self at shows—fans who never graced the planet while Jerry Garcia was alive, and we are all singing along to every word. There are people who love the Grateful Dead who don't even know it yet, and whether we saw the band with Jerry or not doesn't matter. This music will continue to weave its eternal thread through the deepest reaches of consciousness and beyond.

Jambands.com Radio Chart

FOR THE MONTH OF MAY

1. Roots of Creation *Livin Free*
2. Ben Harper & The Innocent Criminals *Call It What It Is*
3. King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard *Nonagon Infinity*
4. Hard Working Americans *Rest in Chaos*
5. The Infamous Stringdusters *Ladies & Gentlemen*
6. Anders Osborne *Spacedust & Ocean Views*
7. Elephant Revival *Petals*
8. Joe Bonamassa *Blues of Desperation*
9. Fruition *Holehearted Fools*
10. Robert Randolph & The Family Band *Unclassified*
11. B.D. Lenz *Manifesto*
12. TAUK *Headroom*
13. Sister Sparrow & The Dirty Birds *The Weather Below*
14. Twiddle *PLUMP*
15. D-Town Brass *Golden Belt*
16. Charles Bradley *Changes*
17. The Unseen Strangers *Stranger Places*
18. Achilles Wheel *XIII Hours*
19. Daemon Chili *Mercy of the Sea*
20. Jocelyn & Chris Arndt *Edges*
21. Kung Fu *Joyride*
22. Ontologics *Drones from Home*
23. Larry Keel *Experienced*
24. Bombino *Azel*
25. The Revivalists *Men Amongst Mountains*
26. American Babies *An Epic Battle Between Light and Dark*
27. Unified Highway *Unified Highway*
28. Santana *Santana IV*
29. The Movement *Golden*
30. Ziggy Marley *Ziggy Marley Weekend's Long*

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Dead. Talk about a transition—in every way that you could imagine, I experienced the change to the fullest. We didn't have inner-ear monitors like they do today, so going into a live setting was very different for me and, of course, the Grateful Dead is a loud band, and it was a struggle to stay in tune, on pitch and everything. I was competing with this huge sound system, and then it got to be the Wall of Sound, so it was tough.

But I loved it, and I learned so much from it, especially the way they thought of that harmony. It was different from what I had experienced doing session work, where I knew where the part was going to go—it was already determined what I was going to do vocally. Then, with the Grateful Dead, their parts would go all over the place. It was hard sometimes to determine who was singing the lead because the parts kept changing and switching from one place to the other, which I thought was fascinating. I had not been singing like that in a vocal capacity until the Grateful Dead, so it was a new experience for me and I loved it—I still love it.

These tapes were recorded by Betty Cantor-Jackson. Can you talk about your relationship and also some of the challenges you may have faced as pioneering women in the rock industry?

Betty and I were great friends. Everywhere I went, she went. We were with one band or another—the Garcia Band or the Grateful Dead—so we were obviously very close. We were pregnant together—her son Cole and my son Zion are six months apart, so we had a bunch of things going on in common. I remember, vividly, recording the *Keith & Donna* album in our house in Stinson Beach, and she had a newborn and I had a six month old in the back room where we were recording. So Betty and I had, and still do have, a great rapport and have remained great friends throughout the years. I can't say enough good things about Betty.

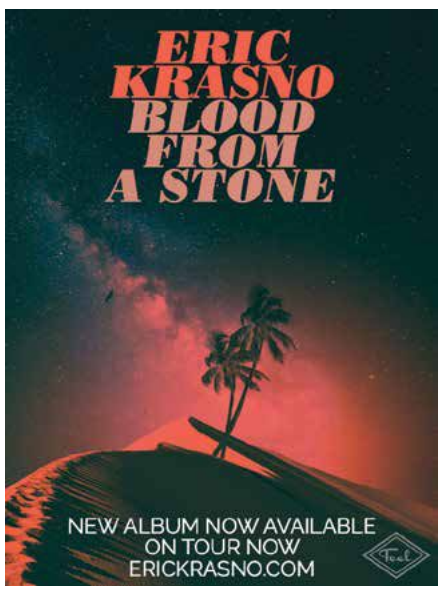
As for the second part of your question, I don't think Betty or myself encountered that kind of thing. We were treated with respect by the crew and by the band. Jerry Garcia encouraged me to write songs and to do more and sing more, which I did. At the time, I never felt like we were lesser than the guys. We were doing our job, and we were doing what was meaningful to us. That was never an issue for me; I never even thought about it. Maybe I should have, but, at the time, I was just so glad to be singing with that band. It was just an amazing thing and it was something that doesn't come down the pike every day. I was so fortunate to be able to jump into it and be a part of it. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

You spent time with Jerry Garcia in a variety of different settings. What would you say is most underappreciated nowadays, by the general public, about him, whether it be creatively or personally?

Oh, boy, that's a loaded question right there because he was such an incredible human being and guitarist and innovator and, actually, as far as I'm concerned, created a new style of music, which was the improvisational aspect—you can take any song and do with it what you want to do with it and call it your own. As long as it resonates within you, you can make that song your own. He did that with every song that he played. He took so many genres of music and melded them into the Grateful Dead. You get jazz, you get honky-tonk, you get country, you get gospel, you get rock-and-roll, you get everything.

Jerry listened to all kinds of music, all the time. I think that's one of the joyful things about it. He enjoyed music; it didn't matter where it came from. He listened to so much music that, out of that love of music, came his inclusion of all of these genres that morphed into this incredible band called the Grateful Dead. That changed people's way of thinking about music, and brought them into an area emotionally, and almost spiritually, that made them want to see every Grateful Dead concert, or as many as they could get to. I don't want to be strictly talking about the Grateful Dead here—Garcia Band as well.

He also was inclusive as a person as well as a musician. I saw that man be one of the most generous people that I have ever known. For instance, backstage, if some young guitarist came up to him hungry and starstruck at being at Garcia's feet, he would take the time to teach them something, talk to them, just draw them into a place of "You can do this. You can, you can, *you can*." He was so generous with everybody, which was always amazing to me—how kind he was to people in that regard, and they loved him for it. It wasn't put on, he was a generous human being, both in music and in his life, and he taught me more than anybody has ever taught me. Just by his personality, his being, his humor, his music, everything, I grew and grew and grew. I don't know where I would be at today had it not been for knowing him.



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Ziggy 4 '20

Gregory Bojorquez

and love on this Earth—just as much as they can have war and violence and suffering. It's not a fantasy," says Marley. "I'm not saying it because I'm smoking, even though you think so."

PLAY AND WORK OFTEN converge as Ziggy turns his side interests into active pursuits. In his downtime, Marley enjoys staying out of the public eye, working in his garden and catching up on movies. Southern California affords him clear skies and a coastline for spins on his motorcycle.

A vocal advocate of the non-GMO movement, Ziggy launched a line of food products four years ago under the banner Ziggy Marley Organics that offers various coconut oils and roasted hemp seeds. In 2010, Marley and brothers Rohan and Robbie trekked across South Africa on top-gear Ducatis, filming the adventure for an eventual *Marley Africa Road Trip* mini series. This past winter, Ziggy made his acting debut, appearing on the CBS television show *Hawaii Five-O*.

"It's always good to experience life. I feel I grew from that," Marley says of his day on the show's set. "It was in the middle of the record. By the time I returned to the album, that experience was already affecting the next step in the music."

Despite these other pursuits, Marley's focus is still on the music. He prefers to write alone, outside or in his home studio when his children are at school. Marley composes on guitar and is not satisfied that a song is a song until he can play it as complete.

"I keep singing until it records in my brain," explains Marley. "I like a song to have a vibe and a spirit. That's the soul of music right there."

Coleman adds: "He always maps out what he really wants musically."

As his own boss, Marley never rushes to meet a label's deadline or worries about a bottom line.

"Mostly, I wait on the muse," he says. "It's always on time when it's time."

Last summer, he celebrated and honored his father's 70th birthday year, performing a special concert with Stephen at the Hollywood Bowl, and curating an album of Bob Marley songs with the One World Chorus. Marley says these were all learning experiences, but those special moments, in particular, were only part of his continuous, and subliminal, creative progression.

"I think all my experiences, from birth until now, are put into my music today," he says.

For as effective a mouthpiece as an album can be, it is on the road and on the stage where Ziggy connects strongest with his citizenry. It's where he finds the pulse of the people.

"It's a more joyful kind of vibe," Coleman says of performing the new material. "There's a little more happiness, brightness, and it's livelier."

This summer, Marley is on tour across America, playing rural Northeast hamlets like Webster, Mass., and heartland cities such as Lincoln, Neb. He'll be watching as the country approaches the precipice of political history, and he'll be singing for changes.

"I want to wake up the people to see the possibilities of common good more than the differences," says Marley. "Stop hating each other because of political doctrines and racial doctrines. It's stupid. We need to figure it out."

 Continued from page 44

Flowing between acoustic and electric, guitarists like William Tyler and Steve Gunn are new-model guitar heroes, something above and beyond slingers-for-hire, as they use their guitars for a fully open type of creative communication. In some players, the music event takes on familiar forms, even as it nods back to improv spaces from the past. Sometimes there's singing. Occasionally there are even big dramatic solos. But no pointing.

Playing with the celestial improv unit GHQ in the early 2000s before launching a mostly solo acoustic career, Gunn "started to feel a little trapped and constrained in what I could do personally and how I was perceived, because there's such a huge shadow that's cast around that style. I was trying to be a little more expansive than those parameters. Singing was something I was building up to." The guitar and its constant motion remain at the center of his newest album, *Eyes on the Lines*, but the songs now also have words, choruses and big dramatic moments served by Gunn's own voice. "I was trying to do things that were too complicated, especially singing on top of it," he says. "I started realizing maybe I can even *strum* a guitar."

"I don't write words and I'm not a good singer, so I'd rather spare the world," says the Nashville-based William Tyler. An assured and graceful instrumental voice that sometimes sounded like a countrypolitan Jerry Garcia, even before Tyler fell into a prolonged Grateful Dead obsession, his guitar is more like a lead character that appears under a series of shifting circumstances. On 2014's *Lost Colony* EP, Tyler met Luke Schneider's pedal steel on soaring joints of krautrock-Americana. This summer, he pairs up with bassist Darin Gray and Wilco drummer Glenn Kotche on *Modern Country*, his most wide-ranging set.

Citing Ben Chasny, the acoustic/electric drone-folk hero who has recorded since the late '90s as Six Organs of Admittance, as an influence, Tyler says, "I started off with [the idea of a] more holistic thing. I wanted to make homemade, experimental music." In doing so, he discovered that being a solo guitarist could also be quite practical. "It offered a way of doing [live] stuff without a band."

William Tyler: His guitar is like a lead character that appears under a series of shifting circumstances

Will Holland

"People discover themselves at different rates," says Chris Forsyth, a Philadelphia-based guitarist who has led a rotating Solar Motel Band since 2013, having previously done time in the experimental group Peeesseye. "I just kept going and found this way of playing." Most recently, Forsyth has begun to sing, too, but the Solar balance mostly rests on his soaring leads, which find a thrilling spot on the horizon between the fluid Jerry zones and the neon starlight of Television's *Marquee Moon*. On *The Rarity of Experience*, Forsyth finds an excellent foil in Nick Millevoi, another Philadelphia-based player whose own *Desertion* reveals him as a jazz-drenched electric guitarist who could *maaaybe* make Frank Zappa cool again. It's 2016. Anything could happen.

> "I don't write words, and I'm not good singer, so I'd rather spare the world."
>
> **WILLIAM TYLER**

* * *

DOWNSTAIRS IN THE reconstructed 15th-century French arcade, Sarah Lipstate unravels galaxies with her Fender Jaguar, soaring waves of sound that recall Sonic Youth's most cosmic moments reduced to only the glorious guitar. Upstairs at the annual New York Guitar Festival, in a room from a monastery once shipped piece by piece over the Atlantic, Earth guitarist Dylan Carlson (a good ol' Dead freak) peels off solo drone-blues, suggesting that maybe he should be assigned "Morning Dew" the next time someone organizes a Dead tribute.

Held this year at the Cloisters, a hyperreal Frankenstein of old-world architecture nestled in Manhattan's Fort Tryon Park, the Guitar Festival's marathon draws overflow crowds that wind down the stone steps and verandas. Upstairs, William Tyler performs unamplified under a Virgin Mary. Chicago jazz-folk guitarist Ryley Walker is in a chapel, under a giant crucified Christ. "Bummer," he says, looking up. The new players go side by side with world-class oudists (Simon Shaheen) and the insane rhythms of players like Gyan Riley (son of Terry).

"It's a punk reaction to the Yngwie [Malmsteen] world," says David Spelman, who co-founded the festival in 1999. "But these players also have extraordinary technique. I think there are a lot of threads that come together, and a lot of chapters in the story, and result in someone like a William Tyler or a Ryley Walker. If you look at music history, you have an ebb and a flow between diatonicism and chromaticism, or maximalism and minimalism—these things kind of ebb and flow between experimentation and conservatism. Things go through these cycles and what's old feels new again."

He continues: "Because of its role in popular music, guitar is an entry point for lots of ideas that come from contemporary classical music and experimenters, whether it's from the American Primitive side of things or the world of conservatories."

Most excitingly, though, sometimes what's new is new. And, right now, that seems like a limitless natural resource.

Jim Breuer

BY DEAN BUDNICK

WITH HIS NEW ALBUM *SONGS FROM THE GARAGE*, comedian Jim Breuer blends his unique comic perspective with the heavy-metal sounds that first animated him as a teenager. "I actually don't like a lot of funny songs," Breuer explains. "I think Sam Kinison's 'Wild Thing' is probably the only thing I really love. It took time for me to figure out how to do it just right. Even then, I didn't gain my confidence until I had all my cards lined up and Rob Caggiano (Volbeat, Anthrax) became my producer. He taught me so much about writing lyrics, writing choruses and pushing me to a limit that I didn't know I was capable of. At the end of the day, it was my collaboration with him that really made this a monster." *Songs from the Garage*—which also features a guest turn from AC/DC vocalist Brian Johnson, who is currently sitting out his own group's 2016 run due to hearing issues—finds Breuer backed by his band The Loud & Rowdy, which will accompany him for a series of dates in support of the record.

You were the host of the Jammy Awards in 2001. What are your memories of that night?

Besides Bernie Williams [the New York Yankees center fielder performed with Jazz Mandolin Project] and all the music—it really was a great show—there was this older guy [Col. Bruce Hampton] who asked me a few questions, like, "OK, there's a key. You found a key; what does the key look like?" When he was done, I remember him going, "Wow, wow, wow..." Everyone asked him what it meant and he said, "He's got a very old soul; Breuer's got a very deep, old soul. He's way ahead of his time." That was cool.

You also collaborated with The Derek Trucks Band. What were your thoughts about him at the time?

I really was an outsider, and I didn't factor in who he was, or who his family was, or what kind of guitar guy he was. So my attitude toward him was, "Oh, my God, you're so young. I'm so excited for you. How exciting, you get to be part of this."

Moving to the present, how did Brian Johnson come to play on your new album?

He always comes to see me do comedy when he's home in Florida. He's been one of my advocates telling me I need to really do this—"Jim, your voice is amazing. Jim, boy, you can sing. You should really sing." He came up to me after a show and said, "I heard you're making a record. I want to sing on it." I didn't feel comfortable taking him up on it, but then he called me when we were in pre-production for the album and told me he wanted to come to the studio. So Rob and I worked on something that I presented to him. I said, "I want to do two guys who are getting old and everyone thinks they're old and out, but these two can still tear it up." And he was like, "Oh, Jimmy, son, that's me life, that's me life. I'm so tired of everyone saying I'm too old for the business and I love it!"

He sang with a handheld microphone, no headphones, in the room with all the guys. He wanted to feel like he was in concert and that's the only way he records. I was just standing there, and that was the first time it really hit me: "This isn't Brian the generous man and the funny man, one of the greatest guys I know; this is Brian Johnson, the legendary rock-and-roll singer, and he's singing on my album!"

When you perform live, what is the balance you hope to strike between comedy and music?

The way I've always seen this is that my stories have a score underneath them from the band. It's a one-man theatrical show meets an amazing '80s metal concert meets belly-laughing comedy. It is an event that no one's ever been part of. I see it as: You're going to see a traveling play where you're going to laugh, you're going to bang your head, you're going to love the music and you're going to be able to relate to almost everything that's going on.

It's going to look like a three-car garage, and the concert is going to start with the lights out and a video playing of me waking up and realizing no one is home in my house, and there's going to be a note and a voiceover that says, "You have an hour and a half before we're home; please be productive." And that's when the band is going to slowly light up, but the concert doesn't begin until I walk into that garage, I put on my headphones and away we go for the rest of the show.

You mention that it's going to harken back to a classic '80s metal show. What were your formative experiences as an audience member?

To me, the ultimate was Judas Priest, *Defenders of the Faith* and the *Screaming for Vengeance* tours—a lot of laser lights, a lot of cool stage settings. That was one of the coolest theatrical things I've ever seen in my life. It was awesome. It was The Wiggles for adults. That's what I want to do. I want to be The Wiggles for adults, where you can bang your head.

Speaking of Judas Priest, I assume you've seen *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* at some point over the years?

Of course, that was me! I'm shocked I'm not in it—thank God they didn't catch me because that *was* me. I was the meathead there at noon going, "Eight more hours! Eight more hours!" with my boombox. It was hilarious.

If you had to put four faces on your metal Mount Rushmore, who would you anoint?

Very easy: James Hetfield, Ozzy Osbourne, Rob Halford, and, although he's not heavy metal, Brian Johnson. That's my Mount Rushmore.

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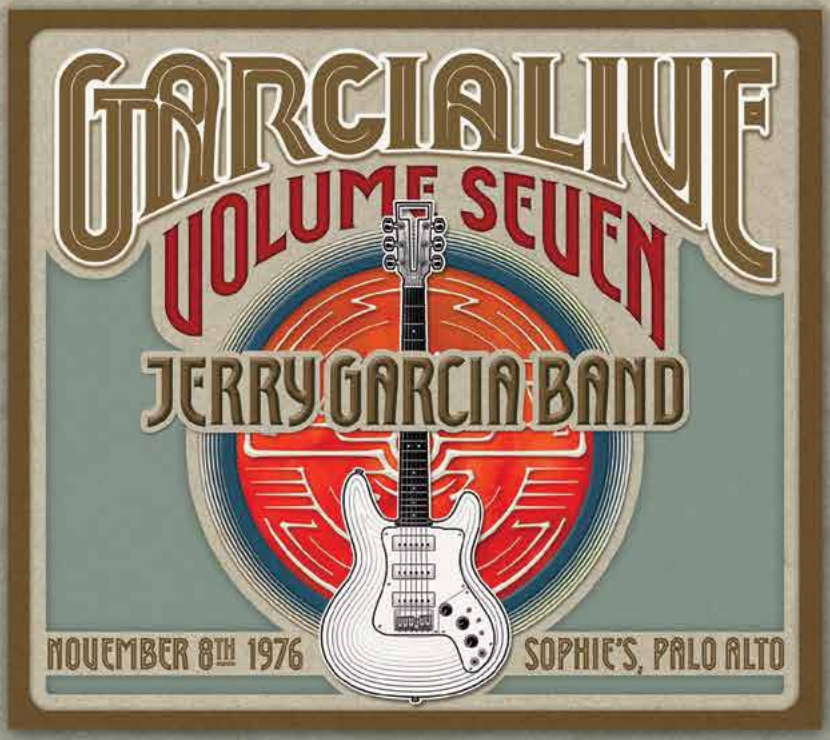

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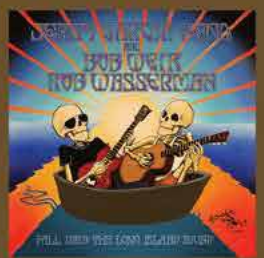

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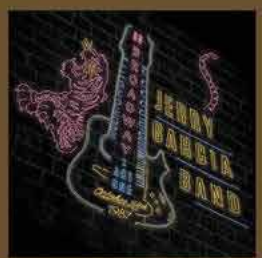

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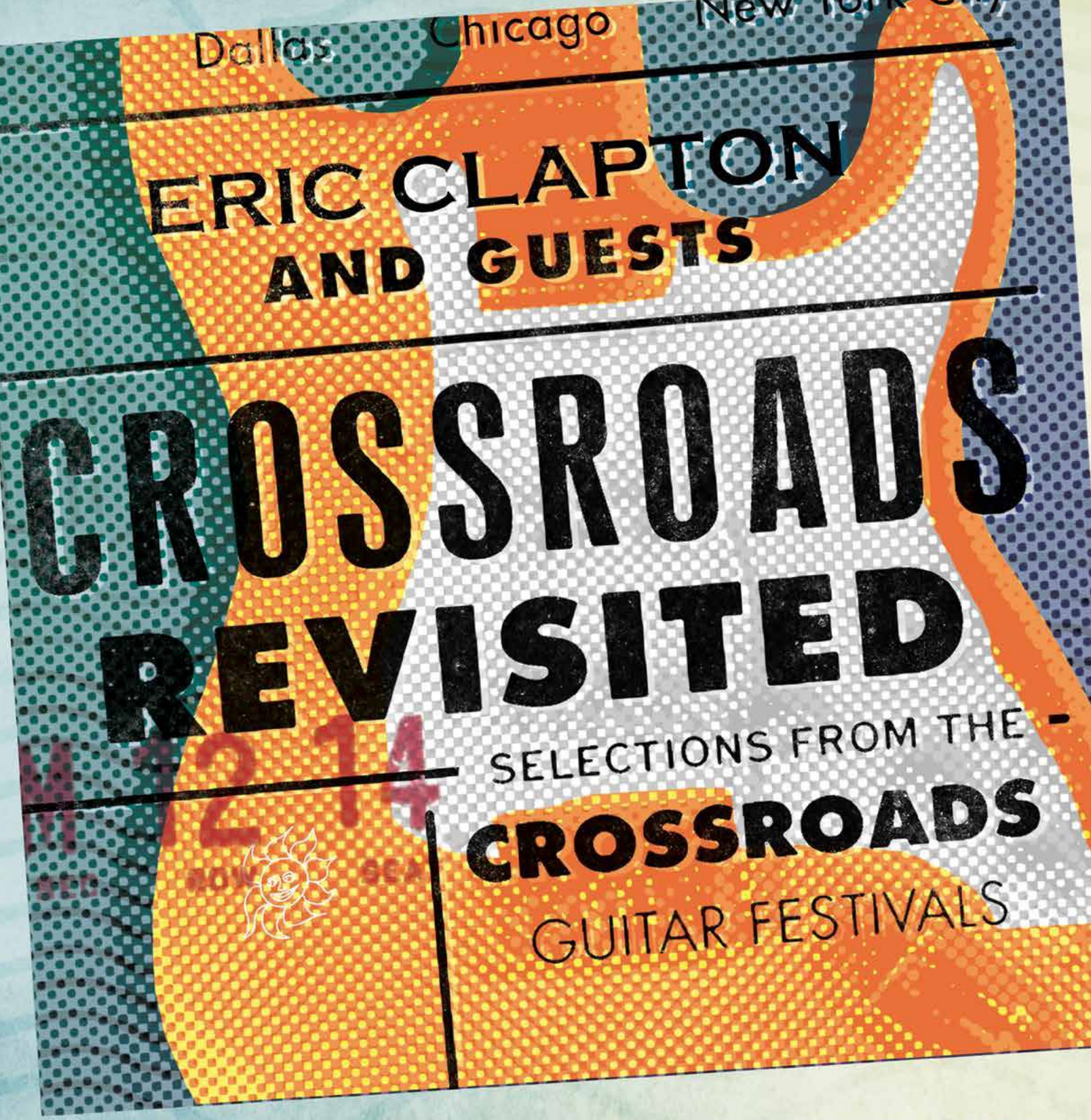

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